THE MYSTIC BRIDE

A STUDY OF THE LIFE-STORY OF CATHERINE OF SIENA

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THE ECSTASY OF ST. CATHERINE.

By Ludovico Carracci.

At the Borghese Gallery, Rome.

Frontispiece.

THE MYSTIC BRIDE

A STUDY OF THE LIFE-STORY OF CATHERINE OF SIENA

BY

MRS AUBREY RICHARDSON

Author of
"Women of the Church of England," "Famous Ladies of the English Court," "The Lover of Queen Elizabeth," etc.

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To the

MEMORY OF

MY DEAR MOTHER

MARGARET HUNTING

PREFACE

My aim in the following pages has been to compare and interpret existing presentments of a woman who, typically and individually, was indeed a *Mystic Bride*, a representative for all time of womanhood and saintship.

"Catherine of Siena: a Biography," by Mrs Josephine Butler (1878); "The History of St Catherine of Siena and her Companions," by Mrs Augusta Theodosia Drane (1880); "Saint Catherine of Siena and her Times," by the author of "Mademoiselle Mori" (1906); "Saint Catherine of Siena: a Study in the Religion, Literature and History of the Fourteenth Century in Italy," by Professor Edmund G. Gardner (1907); "The Dialogue," translated and edited by Mr Algar Thorold (1896); "The Letters of Saint Catherine of Siena," translated and edited by Miss Vida D. Scudder (1905), and "Catherine de Sienne, Sa vie et son rôle dans l'Italie du quatorzième siècle," Mignaty; with some references to Italian editions of the letters and to other histories of the period, including "La Cour de Rome," by M. Felix Rocquain, have been the chief sources from which I have gathered the materials for this book, and I desire in

this preface most thankfully to acknowledge my indebtedness to the erudite and discerning authors whose researches and scholarship have provided such ample groundwork for my study. It is my sincere hope that any reader of this book of my writing, not already acquainted with the fascinating biographies of Catherine I have named, will have their interest in the Saint's character and career sufficiently awakened to lead them to read the other English books that have been made about her.

Jerusha D. Richardson.

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THE MYSTIC BRIDE

INTRODUCTION

If it be true, as a woman[1] has written, that "Whosoever should portray truly the life and death of a little flower—its birth, sucking in of nourishment, reproduction of its kind, withering and vanishing—would have shaped a symbol of all existence," it is true also that in the history of one woman, truly studied, may be read the story of all women.

In no one woman can the full height, depth and breadth of womanhood be perfectly exemplified, yet there have been, and are, individual types in whom the multiple emotions, capacities and energies of women in the aggregate, seem to be extraordinarily personified. The story of such a one must be an enlightening story. Every female saint, each heroine of history represents, in some sense, a worthy idea, a special perception, a particular activity, a wonderful grace, that belongs to womankind in general. Yet most of them afford only contracted views of womanhood's possibilities. We see their figures in a half-light. We may ascertain this much of any one of them, that she accomplished a certain work, attained to a certain fame, performed a certain deed, associated with certain persons; but we know no more of her. The springs of the energies, the

[1] Olive Schreiner.

causes of the actions and the reasons of the friendships, are hidden from us, or partly hidden. And this is as true of women of our own times of much notoriety, as it is of those of days that were unexploited by the printing-press.

Some few—how pitifully few out of all the myriads who have lived, loved, worked and died! —stand in fuller light. It has fallen to their lot to have their ways and actions, their persons and their characters, admired, execrated or discussed, but, in any case, memorialised, by their associates of literary proclivity. And they themselves have taken pens in hand and, consciously or unconsciously, drawn for us portraits of their inner selves. The lives of these form interesting and improving study. We others may learn from the tales of their hopes and failures, their endeavours and attainments, their sorrows, passions, disappointments and despairs, how better to live and how better not to live. We may be encouraged by the accounts of difficulties greater than our own, being triumphed over by frailer and more lightly equipped human creatures than even we ourselves may be. We may be guarded from disaster by histories of peace sacrificed and honour forfeited for loves and fancies that proved bitter-sweet in the indulgence. We may be instructed in holiness by descriptions of austerities and denials bravely practised, even passionately sought, by women to whom was given abundantly sense of their own unworthiness and of the Lord God's exceeding worth.

Down all the ages of history, in every civilisation, of every thought-endowed race, stand the women

with histories who, if not for their own happiness, at least for the enrichment of our human heritage, lived, worked and suffered in some sort remarkably. The records of some are very meagre. Of some there remains for us little more than a name, albeit a name—be it Dido or Boadicea, "Lot's Wife" or Dorcas—that evokes a vision, signifies an event or expresses an idea, ominous or beneficent for all human destiny.

And if these names and fames are few, compared with the innumerable throng of female human creatures who have borne the burden and heat of the day of this life, fewer still are the histories of women that can be regarded as complete; histories that not only detail the words, acts and manners of the women they relate to, in full sequence from the cradle to the grave, but that reveal the thoughts, the heart feelings, the very spirit impulses of the personages whose deeds they chronicle.

Blessed in this respect, as in other ways, was Catherine Benincasa, a dyer's daughter in old Siena. *Saint* Catherine, the populace acclaimed her when, a year after her death in Rome, her sweet, embalmed head was brought back in pompous procession to her native city, Eighty-one years later she was formally canonised by a bull of Pope Pius II., who was himself a native of Siena. In this bull it was registered that, from "a high and well-adorned balcony" in the Basilica of St Peter at Rome, the Pontiff pronounced a discourse on the life and miracles of Blessed Catherine and raised her by "all the accustomed ceremonies" to the altars of the Church. It was declared also that the Sienese Pope would have rejoiced in beholding

the sublime gifts, the noble genius, the divine mind and the holy will of the virgin Catherine, whatever might have been her country, yet with greater joy did he admire them inasmuch as she was a native of the city which gave him birth. Nevertheless, so the bull ran on, such considerations had no power to make its promulgator say more than the truth or omit any of the usual examinations and forms. These forms included the acceptance of petitions "not only from the people of Siena, but from others also"; among them, "Our dear son in Christ, Frederick, the august Emperor of the Romans and our beloved son Paschal, the noble Doge of Venice," who implored the Pontiff "no longer to withhold the honours due to this holy virgin, for whom their people entertain much devotion, and of whom many wonderful prodigies are related."

These "prodigies" were already being related in 1411—only thirty-one years after the death of Catherine—and were embodied in a *Process* containing depositions of persons cited to appear before the Bishop of Venice to answer charges brought against them of rendering public honours to Catherine of Siena before she had been canonised by the Church. Among these witnesses were those who had known her in the flesh, and their evidence, after careful weighing and considering, was embodied in the final Process which was recited, in a full court of bishops and cardinals at Rome, by the mouth of Bishop William of Porto, a Frenchman by birth, who had been named by the Pontiff, chief of the commissaries for inquiring into all the circumstances of the life and death of the Virgin of Siena.

These circumstances are not all enumerated in the processes although their fulness of detail is remarkable. In other public archives and ecclesiastical registers, as well as in biographies and memoirs written by friends and disciples and in her own letters and writings, we have preserved for us a singularly vivid picture of the maid of the fourteenth century (in Italian the *trecento*) who is celebrated for all time as St Catherine of Siena.

We have portraits of her also "in her habit as she lived" that cannot be unlike their original, although most of them are painted by artists of much later times, but then they were artists who had been familiar from their earliest years with the tradition of the saint's appearance. Two representations however, one a picture (now much restored) and the other a bust, may be regarded as true resemblances, since the one was primarily the work of Andrea di Vanni, a correspondent of the Saint, and the other is reputed to have been fashioned from a mask taken after death.

But more directly—even more dramatically—than in any other records, Catherine appears before us in her own writings. For all her self-disciplinings, even her self-torturings, she had a poet-soul. She revelled in literary imagery. Her fancy ranged wide and free. Her letters, even to her nearest kin and humblest friends, are treasures not only of Italian, but of European literature. Her writings of imagination, for so we must call her "Dialogue," rank as well in the catalogues of those critics for whom a limited artistry is all there is of art, as in the wider lists of humanists of deeper apprehensions and more universal sympathies, among the

creations of genius that have led historians, philosophers, æsthetes and divines to see in Catherine's time the dawn of that religious reformation which Luther brought to zenith and the foreglow of that great renascence of art and learning that came to full light in the sixteenth century.

While Catherine in France and Italy combated with popes and cardinals for a reform of the lives of the clergy, Wiclif in England contended that the body of Christ was contained in the Eucharist only in a figurative manner, and he too fought for reforms of clerical morals. While Catherine echoed the prayers of Petrarch for the return of "Christ on earth" from Avignon to Rome and the planting about the "lily of the papacy" of a garden of sweet peace and good will, Chaucer spelt out lessons of life that were to issue in an abandonment of romanticism for realism, in his great transitional poem "The Canterbury Tales," and to culminate eventually in the higher criticism of the Bible forecasted in the lines:

> ". . . Ye wot that every Evangelist
> That telleth us the pain of Jesus Christ,
> Ne saith not all things as his fellow doth.
> . . . . . .
> For some of Him say more and some say less,
> When they His piteous passion express."[1]

And it was immediately following upon Catherine's unabashed exposures of monkish and clerical vices in her "Dialogue," that Boccaccio, with remorseless vivacity, drew his fictional pictures of depravity in high places. The sinner who wrote the "Decameron," in common with the saint who dictated the "Dialogue," had an unerring vision for all

moral corruption underlying religious profession. The perceptions of both the Troubadour and the Virgin were sharp as to the hypocrisies and vices of the affluent among the clergy and the laity. Boccaccio, cynical and pictorial, related the histories and adventures that took place round about him, as an entertainment for readers whose morals might or might not be as loose as those he depicted with that relish which makes his writings as true a human document in its kind as Catherine's outpourings are in theirs. But the references of Catherine to the lust, pride and meanness of the ecclesiastics of her day are denunciatory and exhortative. Her eyes were too pure to behold iniquity without a shudder; her aspirations too holy to see debauchery and not rebuke it. Yet there is nothing little, inexperienced or anæmic in her judgments and views of life. If ever a woman had a full-blooded nature it was Catherine Benincasa. Her visions of heaven and hell are comparable to Dante's own. For her, as for the sublime poet, there was ever a great gulf fixed between the holy and unholy, the blessed and the damned. But she appraised none for the fiction or the semblance of virtue; she utterly condemned only the brazen, the cold-hearted, the exultantly hypocritical. Indeed the only time in her life in which—so far as the records show—she appeared haughty both in spirit and in manner was at the papal court at Avignon. There, venal, luxurious, soft-living cardinals and bishops were held at such a distance, and denounced so unreservedly, that even those to whom her purity and nobility were most precious, thought her too uncompromising. But she knew these clerics to be false and cruel, even as

she knew to be spiteful and cold-hearted, the ladies of the Court—the bedecked and scented Estephanettes, Elys and Enémondes—who started a cult of the Saint who tranced as she prayed, and made it a fashionable appointment to be in Catherine's chapel at the hours in which she knelt there in ecstasy, oblivious of all surroundings. The kindest treatment Catherine found it in her to mete out to these women, with their pretty names, languorous ways and treacherous hearts, was to ignore them. They had indeed as little business to be where as what they were. Poor, outcast, nameless, friendless creatures who had sinned, Catherine could caress or scold, according to each straying little sister's need. But the gay and artificial courtesans of the prelates at Avignon she disdained as hypocrites, "full of the odour of sin."

Yet deep as were her discernments, and far-reaching as were her thoughts and hopes, Catherine had her limitations—the limitations of her period, sex and temperament. She had the woman's special quality—a blessing or a curse according to the use made of it—of receptivity. Quickly she came under influences of place and hour; so quickly that it was sometimes hard to see she had been subjected to influences when their mark was already upon her. At seven years old, some talk of her elders—common talk of the time—or some friar's discourse in church or on the market-place, approved—as such discourses ever approved—the dedication of virginity to God. Instantly—for it can no more be believed that any rational process intervened than that, at her childish age, the idea was original—the little Catherine was on her

knees, making a vow of perpetual maidenhood. In the same way, when tales of desert-hermits and cave-dwelling prophets were unfolded to her, Catherine—then little more than six—trudged off one day to find the desert and the cave in which she likewise should become a holy being and thing of reverence. So it was in later life, after she had long studied what she held to be the supreme life-lesson, *to know oneself.* Too rapidly did Catherine in Florence assimilate the idea that proscription of popularly elected Ghibellines in office, was justifiable for purposes of Guelph policy. And later still, in Rome, she allowed the forces of the hour to overpower her strict integrity, when she countenanced the Pope's employment of armed marauders to hew down and despoil his enemies and thus, upon the suggestions of the place and the predicament, surrendered the better view that, under an earlier persuasion, had seemed so inalienably her own; even the view expressed in her letter to Pope Gregory XI., then in Avignon, when she bade him return to Rome. "Come, come, come," she wrote, "and do not wait for time, since time does not wait for you. Then you will do like the Lamb Slain whose place you hold, who without weapons in His hand slew our foes, coming in gentleness, using only the weapons of the strength of love, aiming only at care of spiritual things, and restoring grace to man who had lost it through sin."

It must not be thought that Catherine was not instinctive. She was as instinctive as was ever woman, but she was also most womanly in that she was deeply susceptible. No written or recorded word of hers reveals whether Catherine was

conscious of the power for righteousness that shivered ancient strongholds and quickened forces of new thought when the "Divina Commedia" and the "Vita Nuova" were given to the world. Her writings do not tell if the name of Dante were known to her as that of a lately deceased poet, although many phrases in her letters resemble passages in the "Divina Commedia." In common with all other girls of her time and station, she received no education in the shape of book-learning. There were no books in her day, as we understand them, and she never developed a taste for acquiring or studying rare manuscripts. She could not read until she was in her twentieth year. Power of writing came to her later still. Although it was in the fourteenth century that the Bible was first translated from the Vulgate into the Italian vernacular, it is not very likely that Catherine possessed a full copy. But as we know she studied the Scriptures, she must have had one of the collections of excerpts from the Bible containing certainly the greater part of the Gospels, that circulated in her day. Verbal inaccuracies in her quotations from the Scriptures have been taken to show that she had not read them studiously, and repeated her texts from hearsay alone. But a writer of such fluency and imagination as Catherine was, would not pause for exact words and phrases, but be satisfied to employ the sense and feeling of the passages in her mind as she wrote. In any case she had ample knowledge of Biblical ideas and phraseology acquired by intelligent listening to sermons and intelligent observation of the drama of Church services and the devices of Church decoration. It is, however, certain that one of her

secretaries was a student and devotee of Dante and, whether the name and works of the Florentine were consciously known to Catherine or not, it may be stated that both her cast of thought and mode of expression were, in some sort, what they were, because of the imaginings and expressions of the great poet who lived, moved and had his being, experienced his sorrows, registered his hopes and voiced his aspirations, within but a short space of time and distance from where Catherine grew to womanhood and her mission in life.

There were visions in the air; visions which even Dante had not been unique in beholding, although he had been one alone in his manner of depicting and interpreting them. These visions were of a united Italy, of the restoration of Rome's pontificate to its ancient seat, of the exemplification in a "Christ on earth" of an indubitably Christian character and an undeniably Christian force. And these visions Catherine also beheld. The eyes of her understanding were early opened to see the beauty of holiness, of unity and of what she called so often "sweet peace and charity." Womanlike, she surrendered her soul to that beauty and, moved by her woman's impulse, conceived and brought forth reproductions of it, to which she gave her life's devotion.

Indeed the number of interests, schemes and aspirations which made impression on Catherine's native sensitiveness, is remarkable in an age when transit was slow, government oppressive, literature hand-written and scarce, and the ideal as lifeless, among the generality, as at any time in the Middle Ages.

But with all her susceptibilities and variabilities —and these have been perhaps a little carelessly overlooked by her biographers, impressed as they are, and must be, by her dominant saintliness— Catherine had an underlying soul of steadfastness. Having given herself, once and for all life, to a Heavenly Bridegroom, she never failed in intention and desire to be a faithful spouse. But that she was a spouse of a faultlessness beyond all human limits, or even that her fidelity was never cajoled or flattered into the slightest deflection from the standard of a supernatural perfection, is not to be believed. That she was a great Original in thought and character—if such there be among our humankind—is also not a necessity of credence, even for those who would adore and humbly imitate her. Instinctive and individual, as has been said, Catherine was a rare character. She wielded a rare power. And the spirituality and achievements of her are none the less memorable and none the less honourable, because it is given us to see her very woman of very woman, one with whom the struggle against faults was a desperate struggle and who shrank from, and deliberately avoided, all imputation of powers that were, for the vulgar, miraculous, or of capacities that, being deemed supernatural, were provocative only of idle admiration and foolish amazement.

BOOK I

THE CHILDHOOD OF IMAGINATION

"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child."—1 Cor. xiii. 11.

CHAPTER I

It is instructive to know that the father and mother of Catherine were persons of exceedingly good repute. Giacomo Benincasa lived by an honourable trade. He was a master dyer, employing labour, and a man of the governing class; for in Siena, as in Florence at this time, there was no government by virtue of aristocracy. Elections for offices of rule were popular and frequent—a great deal too frequent for material prosperity or spiritual development. The lower working-classes and peasantry had, however, no voice in public affairs. Siena in the *trecento* was one of the many township commonwealths that at once preserved the individuality of kingless Italy among European states and prevented that unity among Italians which alone could conduct them as a people and as a power along the road of true progress.

But although Benincasa had once served as Chief Magistrate of the city, his turn of mind does not seem to have been political. He was rather a peace-inclining man of religious type; not an ecstatic, but one who noted signs and wonders in common things and ordinary circumstances. He lived a blameless and industrious life, the father of a numerous family and the governor of a consider-

able business and household. Moreover, he was a man of exceptionally clean lips, who shrank from the use of expletives and set his face against profane and lascivious conversation. This was remarkable for an Italian in a time when oaths and curses were freely bandied by both men and women and cleanliness of word and deed, in either sex, but little valued. Lapa Benincasa, Catherine's mother, was of more prosaic temperament, but she too had her parts and excellences, being a frugal, active housewife who brought twenty-five babies into the world. Of these, Catherine with her twin-sister Giovanna (Jane) were the last born but one. Lady-Day, 1347, was the date of their birth. Lapa's physique must have been remarkable. She outlived nearly all her children, at least nine of whom attained maturity, and either became respectable and respected fathers and mothers of families or entered a religious life. The girls, inheriting the mentality of their father, seem all to have been of character more distinctive than their brothers. But Catherine was the only genius in the family. She was probably the younger of the twins and perhaps, at the birth, the smaller and more delicate. We are told she was the mother's favourite. Lapa kept Catherine at her breast and sent Giovanna out to nurse. One need not regard the circumstances as cause and effect, but it appears that little Giovanna did not thrive. We never hear of her as a child or as having left any memory for her twin sister to cherish.

There was French as well as Italian blood in Catherine's veins, and her maternal grandfather was counted a poet. Thus Catherine, woman of the

people—*la popolana*—had a more than respectable heritage. She came forth from the vigorous heart of the community to which she belonged. Hers was the middle condition : neither too high nor too low to understand the thoughts and needs of men in every state.

So much for the rock whence Catherine's robust nature was hewn. The researches that have given us knowledge of the Saint's family, are valuable indeed. Valuable also are the descriptions of Siena —its topography and architecture, its political and social condition in the fourteenth century—in which all the later English biographies of the Saint are rich. We should know much less of Catherine if we knew nothing of the heredity and environment that formed and transformed the mould of her spirit's grace. But if we had yet fuller information and more intimate knowledge still of the physical and mental origin and influences which, in their share, edified her character and controlled her destiny, we should not know the Saint herself, in any recognisable way, unless we knew also her sayings and writings, the things she did and the things she endured ; above all, unless we had some records of what was the effect of association with her upon her companions, and what the impression made by her upon those whose lives were brought, day by day, in contact with her own. Of these things, happily, much has been ascertained.

Catherine, in person and in essence, lives to-day as it is given to but few women to survive the span of their earth-life, in the consciousness of the race from which all individuals emerge and which is more or less lucidly epitomised in each one.

When Catherine was still a little tot, with long, hanging mane of chestnut curls, big grey eyes widely set, laughing mouth and rounded chin, she was known throughout the quarter of her birth—the *Contrada dell' Oca*—by the nickname of *Euphrosyne*—child of joy. To understand her later character aright, one must dwell upon the thought of the flashing ray of delight she was at five years old, to many of her elders. Girls of the Latin races mature early to this day. In the fourteenth century the precocity of them reached a pitch that is to us now almost unbelievable. The quick, darting intelligence and natural heart-gaiety which is another name for high courage, of Catherine, were early manifest. The charm of manner and gesture which came to be so much extolled as a saintly attribute, radiated freely from her even in her unregenerate childhood. Her dancing presence was truly as that of the one of the Three Graces for whom she was named. Her cheerfulness radiated benefits; she gave gratitude for every kindness received and her graciousness, like that of the revolving Graces, had thankful recognition back again.

But there was another *Euphrosyne* to whom also Catherine was compared, one whose story would be stronger in appeal to a child's imagination than any account of the mental attributes of the virgin-attendant on Venus and the heathen God of Love. *Saint Euphrosyne* was a maid of the fifth century, who, having dedicated herself to God, avoided all temptation to break her vow, by disguising herself as a man and retiring into a monastery. In the temperament and manner of the child Catherine, there was

more than probably some boyish attribute that suggested to her elders that it would be no alien thing for her to do as did the Christian Euphrosyne. Indeed very soon the idea of avoiding certain persuasions of life, by leaving her home and disguising herself as a boy-novice in a monastery, sprang up in Catherine from the seed of the thought dropped by the bestowal on her of her nickname. A prudent confessor persuaded her against the adventure, but the fact of her proposing it to herself, and consulting her director about it, shows how deeply, for a time, the notion suggested by Saint Euphrosyne's legend and her own tomboy impulses, rooted itself in her fertile imagination and susceptible mind. Catherine, in whom vivacity and sweet, active sympathy remained always dominant characteristics, seemed in the early budding of her qualities to be endowed with quite angelic gentleness and brightness. Even among the sprightly, albeit somewhat calculating, Sienese maidens she grew among, her gaiety was exceptional. The precocity of most Italian children is a precocity of the senses, and of the sense called common. She who was named *Euphrosyne* because of qualities, half pagan and half Christian, that brought to the minds of the worshippers of her childhood's grace, both a goddess and a saint, was a being compact of imagination and sweet tenderness. Her precocity was that of soul and mind. Yet free-limbed, well-nourished offspring of a sturdy race—a race in which Southern voluptuousness and impulse were tempered and illuminated by dwelling upon heights not scaled without much putting forth of virile strength—she was not late to discover going forward in her members, a battle of flesh

against spirit. Meantime, her imaginings and dreams were all of high and heavenly things.

Catherine had her first vision in her sixth year. Coming back with her brother, Stefano, a boy probably only a year or two older than herself, from the house of their married sister, Bonaventura, the children crossed the valley that separates the hill upon which the towering transept of the magnificent *Duomo* dominates the city, from that crowned by the gaunt, vast Church of *San Domenico.* Gazing upward as she turned to climb the street that led to the *Fullonica*, her home, the child of quick and contemplative imagination saw above the sky-obscuring church roof, a group of the wondrous personages who could but be associated for her with the Church and with the heavens. Our Lord was in the vesture imposed upon the mind of tiny Catherine, as upon many antecedent and succeeding generations of the sons and daughters of earth, as the most sacred and awe-inspiring garb imaginable. He wore the robes and tiara of the Pope of Rome. With the Saviour were St Peter, St Paul and St John the Evangelist, backed by a crowd of white-robed figures. The flash of the sudden picture upon the sensitive mind of the child, whose lively fancy had created it from all she knew of sacred history and all that the Church of San Domenico represented to her of sacred idea, stunned all thought in her. She gazed in ecstasy, holding the vision in view by the rapt intensity of her delight in it. Christ and His disciples were there for her. And now, what would come next? What but a recognition by the loving Jesus of the little one of imaginative nature ?

THE FONTE-BRANDA.

In the Valley between the Duomo and San Domenico—as in St. Catherine's Time.

No child in dreamland, seeing a hero of its thoughts and fancies, lets that hero pass unconscious of his adorer's presence. The Saviour stretched His right hand towards His little worshipper and made over her the sign of the cross, even as some bishop within the church had done some time over members of his flock in little Catherine's half-puzzled, half-apprehending sight. Then came to her sweet foretaste of the rapture she was to enjoy, almost at will, through life, of complete absorption in her own vivid and glorified reflections upon things seen and known in ordinary experience. She was blind and insensitive to every sight and feeling except the apparition, the gesture and the uplifting influence of her soul's vision.

The account of Augusta Theodosia Drane, paraphrasing and transcribing the words of a cotemporary recorder of Catherine's *miracles,* vividly depicts the scene that followed. The child "continued to stand and gaze, wholly absorbed and as it were united spiritually with that most glorious Lord whom she there beheld, so that she forgot not only whither she was going, but her own self also, and remained there motionless giving no heed either to men or beasts that passed that way ; and so she would have remained even longer had no one called her away. But at length her brother Stephen, who had gone on his way and imagined her to be following, turned back, and seeing her thus standing still in the midst of the road and gazing into the air, he called her aloud by name, but she gave him no answer and seemed not so much as to hear him. Then he drew near, still

calling to her; until at last coming up to the spot where she stood he took her by the hand, saying, 'What are you doing, why are you staying here?' At which words, roused as it were out of a deep sleep as she felt him pulling her by the hand, she cast down her eyes, and looking at him for a moment, 'Oh, did you but see the sight I saw,' she said, 'never would you have disturbed me.' Then she once more raised her eyes, thinking again to have seen the lovely vision; but all had vanished; and full of grief she began to weep bitterly, supposing that she had through her own fault, by turning away her looks, deserved to lose that precious favour."

As Catherine had not completed her sixth year at the time, we have to forgive some exaggerations of her mental attitude, to a historian avowedly presenting the miraculous. Yet co-temporary views have their special illuminations, and those of this anonymous chronicler of "Alcuni Miracoli di Santa Caterina da Siena" show how inevitable it was that a specially sensitive and imaginative child of Catherine's time and place, should believe her dreams had actual substance and, moreover, should regard them as direct and particular signs of God's favour and good will toward her.

But it was never the way of Catherine to take favours as her due. A French biographer has said of her that she was at once a great visionary and a great woman of action. This is true. The instinct of her nature that ever made her visions something more than passive states of receptivity —compelling them to take form, to issue in a voice, to perform in a drama, to deliver an exhortation—

impelled her also ever to translate them into action, to make them generators of some beneficial endeavour, creators of some chastening thought. In her sixth year this instinct had already budded.

"Having reached home," I quote again from Mrs Drane's translation of "Alcuni Miracoli," "she said nothing to father or mother of what she had seen, but from that day there grew up in her a certain carefulness of soul, a fear and remorse of conscience, and dread of committing sin as far as was possible to one of her age. And ever as she grew in years there increased in her this anxiety and she bethought her what means she might take to offend God less, and was always seeking to be alone, and to steal away somewhere out of her parents' sight that she might be able to say her prayers in secret."

Thus for Catherine did the heavens open and the Saviour of the world stretch out His arms to gather her to His kingdom. She was only a little child and it need not be believed that with her outward eyes she saw more than the dazzling radiance of an evening sky, shining the more brilliantly just around and above the black mass of *San Domenico's* blank walls and unornamented gable. It is yet a great moment in life when the many magnificences, the awful lights and shadows of Nature's nightly miracle of sunset, first burst upon a sensitive and poetic sight. But to whatever terms we reduce the seeming glory, however we analyse the facts and circumstances of that evening's happening, this remains: Saint Catherine of Siena received there upon the hillside, and in her sixth year, her call of God. She was only

a little child upon whose quick ears had fallen, through many embryo stages of apprehension, words of preachers who had told, though in another phraseology, of the "Friend for little children above the bright blue sky," who was represented on earth by a robed and tiara'd Pope. She knew too, as well as any over-instructed Protestant Sunday-school child of to-day, that St Peter, St Paul and St John were companions of Our Lord in heaven as they had been His disciples upon earth. The abounding statues in Siena churches would make apostles and saints very easy for her to picture. There is nothing miraculous either in the form or the detail of the vision. By the most natural processes, such a sight as Catherine saw would come into her view. The marvel of the vision is her response to it. It was for her, and should remain for us, a true revelation, showing that even the mind of a little child may become rapt in religious thought; that even a little child may obey the command of the highest law it apprehends.

Catherine had been no saint if she had not had in her the instinct of surrender. The keynote of her character and of her teaching was obedience. Convinced of her Saviour's love for her, she sought to do His will.

CHAPTER II

So the Child of Joy—as it is written—became fearful and remorseful, and the question rises anxiously, Was it well with the child?

There are not wanting critics of our Christianity who say that the "carefulness of soul" and dread of sin which are the natural consequences of the apprehension of God as righteous and retributive, are unhealthy, if not immoral, states for a young mind to be reduced to. True religion should not affect the natural joyousness of childhood. Certain it is that great cruelties have been inflicted upon children and the childish in all Christian ages by wakening in them an extreme terror of the wrath of God and damnation to come.

But if Catherine's earlier gaiety became clouded over, if she grew in some sense secretive and, as we say now, abnormal, it does not appear that any vision of hell-fire brought her to this condition.

Undoubtedly in the background of consciousness, lurked thoughts of God's anger against the wicked and unrepentant—an anger only appeased by Christ's sacrifice on the cross. This statement of the scheme of redemption must have been often made to her by both word and symbol, and from first to last the conviction dwelt with her that only by the blood of Christ is mankind saved. Yet it is significant that it was the vision of a benignant Christ, of Our Lord in Glory, kingly but kind, stretching forth a hand to bless a lowly little

girl, that produced in Catherine the change of soul that took from her her pagan joy, gave her a sense of responsibility for her thoughts and actions and brought to birth the "anxiety" that increased as she grew in years.

Significant also is the fact that the carefulness which was developing in her was not allowed to appear. She kept it, with its wondrous origin and all the pious practices it induced, in a secret place. The first awe of the knowledge of good and evil had descended on her, and she did not at once speak of her fears. She was yet ashamed of the pieties that made her singular among her playmates. Thus, though quite unconsciously, she began to fashion the cell for retirement within herself which she afterwards constructed with conscious and elaborate care.

And all the while her natural buoyancy, her blithe and dancing habits of body were not restrained. The hidden life of the Spirit germinated. Sin in herself and others became increasingly abhorrent. The desire of righteousness grew apace. But Catherine had not been instructed in a harsh school. She had received very little direct religious teaching. By her exquisite sensitiveness to the instructions of all sights and sounds around her—those of overheard conversations of her elders, as well as of ceremonials in church and orations in the market-place—she learned much. But the teaching she most thoroughly assimilated was that of the love of the Saviour for mankind. "*Sweet Jesus, Jesus Love!*" These ecstatic words, reiterated so often in later years as a closing formula of many dictated letters, seem also to have been

her earliest heart-cry. The child's soul lifted naturally in adoration. It was instinctive with Catherine to lavish love. Her mother, though kindly, was practical and corrective. Her father's gentleness and quiet comprehension were not all for her. His tenderness, at most, would be an off-hand caress for the little maid who, according to late mediæval custom, would be treated with a systematic severity which it is difficult for us to-day to associate with parental fondness, yet which was not really alien from it. Catherine, for all inhabitants of the *Contrada dell' Oca*, was a laughing, careless child, whose gay good-nature and even boyish spirits imparted a cheer in which world-wearied folk were content to sun themselves as unquestioningly as they basked in the day-beams that gladdened their narrow streets.

No one noted the young intellect at work, puzzling out the meaning of existence; no one dreamed of the heart-void that demanded, even at six years old, the filling of a great devotion.

But the Christian doctrine of a loving, watching, personal Saviour, who gathers little lambs in His arms, does not leave the tiniest child on earth without a particular Shepherd, without a Friend who can understand. And the teachings of Mediæval Catholicism do more than this. The overshadowing of mundane life with a close company of angelic beings—a protective Virgin-Mother, and a cloud of holy examples and helpers, from the apostles and martyrs of the Bible down to such nominal and equivocal saints as *Lucy*, and even this *Euphrosyne* whose name and story must have been for a time the most familiar of them all to

the little Catherine—leaves no small girl, accustomed to believe what she hears, and passionately desiring recognition and encouragement from her superiors, without assurances of Heaven's approval of her ways, if only the small girl have the imagination and faith to meet God's blessed ones by the way at the close of a summer's day, or to see the heads and hands of their sculptured effigies bend or extend towards the tiny devotee who kneels before their altars.

Vain and morbid children are often rendered vainer and more morbid by literal interpretations of high doctrines of God's providence and care. Children of both smaller and larger growth must needs be taught that reverence is a part of love, and have imparted to them some dread of heavenly mysteries. Holy things too intimately named, or translations of the Word of God into dialects too homely, give to the ignorant and inexperienced an objectionable self-importance ; make the child condescend to its own Father.

But Catherine was neither vain nor morbid ; or so little so—for none of us are wholly without vanity, or altogether indisposed to view life sentimentally from the personal point of view—that such tendency as she had was checked rather than intensified by what she apprehended in childhood of the religion in which she was bred.

Imitative, impulsive, even impatient, as all true children are, the attitude of Catherine from her earliest years was the genuinely pious one. She bowed herself before the throne of God, but did not think that what was passing in her own mind—that which was between herself and her Redeemer

—was necessarily a matter of great interest to her neighbours, or in any way an intercourse that should make her churlish and sour to those with whom she passed her days. And so the child who at five—having learned the *Hail, Mary*, and having probably seen penitents repeating it on the steps of some "Calvary"—"practised the most complete devotion to the Blessed Virgin, kneeling to salute her on every step as she passed up or down the staircase of her father's house," and who at six saw the vision of her Lord in heaven, remained the same little tripping creature she had been at four.

Sometimes when she set herself to go up the stairs of the *Fullonica* in the penible fashion deemed to have a special virtue, her impatient, romping nature would assert itself, and she would run up and down so swiftly and so lightly that some credulous persons watching her, said afterwards they verily believed she had been carried through the air by angels. Her mother, less admiring, if more truly loving, noticing these rash flights, trembled sometimes lest the rushing, bounding little witch should fall. It is evident that Lapa did not see the angels nor regard as strange the phenomenon which Catholic biographers of Catherine, to this day, attribute to supernatural agency. No, Lapa did not believe that her child was upheld by anything more dependable than her own little dancing feet.

Neither the vision on the church roof nor the *Hail, Marys* on the staircase, indicate special morbidity or vanity in an intelligent child of her time and place. And it is not necessary (for all the

saintliness Catherine undoubtedly attained to) to see in her baby imaginings and freaks—innocent and anticipatory though they were—any indications of seraphic, as distinct from human, powers and capacities. But the child was mother of the woman when, as a consequent of her vision, she turned from playing ordinary games of childhood, abstained from some kinds of food, and stole away at times to a retired part of the house where, with a little "discipline" she had herself made of cords, she flagellated herself after the fashion deemed salutary by mediæval churchmen.

So too of her genius for the rule of others, many proceedings of her childhood were prophetic. Not content with the adoption for herself of rules of life that even a little child in her age and situation could not help knowing obtained among many groups of adults, she gathered the children of her quarter round her, and set them to playing a grim game of fasting and self-castigation; a game, after all, not very different from the majority of pastimes devised by children who turn from the classical plays they have been taught by their elders and which have their term of interest, and make up something for themselves. For is not the universal rule of these mummeries which have such a charm for all participants, and particularly for the imaginative leader who composes them, that they are dramas copied from the life around them? So do the children of every place and age, as they in Jerusalem of old, pipe for their comrades to come forth to sing the songs of wedding-feasts and mourn for them to reply by weeping in the manner proper to a funeral ceremony. So did Catherine and her

playfellows in mediæval and ecclesiastic Siena play at penances, abstinences and flagellations.

But if for most children—among the number probably all the little Sienese companions of the child Catherine—the consciousness of make-believe gives the chief savour to their observances of customs and mimicries of ceremonies, it was not so with Catherine. She was constantly seeking actual experience. She wanted to see some outcome, to attain to some result; to take already in childhood the path she would tread through life—the path that would surely lead her to heaven.

She had heard, of course—for few children of Catholic families of any time and place can live without such hearing—of the two kinds of espousals that there are in the world: of how a girl on ceasing to be a child, and this in old Siena was in her twelfth or thirteenth year, could become a bride of heaven or a bride of earth. She might be given in marriage to some stranger-lad who would take her to live in his father's house as her own mother had lived, perhaps still lived, with her husband, in the house of parents who for the child were grandparents, or go into a convent or into retreat in her own home and give herself up to prayer and self-punishment. That the brides of earth would have children of their own some day, but the brides of heaven would never bring up little ones, but, in some special way, be made eternally happy by Christ in heaven and, in intervals of prayer, perhaps take to themselves the guardianship of some orphaned or sick or needy ones, would also be vaguely apprehended. And the child would further possess some nebulous idea

that the condition that made a girl fit to be united to the Heavenly Bridegroom was the same that had made Mary—Mother of God—fit to carry the baby Jesus in her arms; even a condition called virginity. She would more definitely know that she herself was a virgin; that every girl until she became the spouse of some young man was a virgin; therefore, all limited as their meaning must have been for Catherine, they may not have been absolutely parrot-words she spoke when kneeling down one day in an access of desire to be holier, better, more what her Savour would have her be, she said aloud:

"O, most blessed Lady and Sacred Mother of God! who before all other women didst by vow consecrate thy virginity to God, I beseech thee to obtain for me such grace and favour with thy Son that, from this day forward, I may take Him to be the spouse of my soul. And I here give my faith and promise to Him and to thee, that I will never take other spouse but Him and, so far as in me lies, will keep myself pure and unspotted for Him alone to the end of my days."

It is quite possible that these words were actually pronounced in the Latin or the vernacular, by seven-year Catherine. The Prioress of "The Canterbury Tales" tells a legend, that must have had its model in truth, of the boy of seven who learned by rote the first verse of *Alma Redemptoris* from hearing it sung in choir, although "naught wist he what this Latin was to say." But it having been expounded to him that the song was in reverence of Christ's mother, this "Innocent" declared:

"Now certes, I will do my diligence
To con it all ere Christmas is went;
Though that I for my primer shall be shent
And shall be beaten thrice in an hour,
I will it con, our lady for to honour."

The lines run on with the tale of how this really precious babe was eventually rescued from death when he fell among the Jews, by his singing aloud the Latin song, of which he could not possibly understand the meaning, although he knew it to be "our lady for to honour." It is a pious legend, revealing the conviction of the writer's generation as to what it is possible for a child to do in the way of repeating sentences by ear. Catherine did no more than the "Innocent" of Chaucer's memorialising, when she rehearsed a vow of dedication which was doubtless an oft-pronounced one in her day.

The Saint herself was always convinced—at least a biographer justifying a special devotion to her and investing her with all the requirements for a candidate for beatification, according to the popular notions of his place and time, has represented her as convinced—that from the time of her seven-year dedication, the direction of her future life was fixed.

"She often assured her confessors," wrote the Friar Caffarini, who knew her from very early days, "that from the time she thus consecrated herself to God (which she did when little more than six years old) if she entertained so much as an idle thought, or fell into any fault which, however trifling, seemed enormous in her eyes, she lost no time in humbling herself and doing penance."

It is quite believable that a child of precocious intellect, burning with the desire to be good—even if only six years old and not that "little more" that may have been two or three years—should, when she perceived or was told that she had been naughty in any way, inflict upon herself some of the punishments which she had been taught would do away with or make up for her bad thoughts and actions. It is not so believable that, as Mrs Drane assures us, "by a secret instinct of grace she understood"—at less than nine years old—"that she had entered on a warfare with nature which demanded the mortification of every sense."

Of the aims and objects of disciplines she could have understood little more than any modern child, who, having never seen its elders, either in form or in fact, inflicting punishments on themselves, never applies any process of the kind to its own little body, but, on the other hand, being often under the rebuke and penalty of parents and nurses for naughtiness, plays out with dollies or with fictitious babies it talks of as its own, many a game of scolding and punishment, in a manner essentially dramatic. Ironic and retaliatory touches may appear at times in the words and gestures of infant mummers of to-day, but rare indeed are the indications that these young actors have any sense of the present or future moral advantage of the checks and repressions they delight to administer mimetically. In time, of course, the meanings and objects of the system of rewards and punishments, comes to be apprehended; but imitative adoption, as well as practical experience, go before full understanding.

It would be fatuous to try to fix the earliest time in a girl's life at which she could understand the virginal life as a condition of "warfare with nature." The age of maturity, whether for the body or the mind, varies not only in different periods, climes and races, but also, and particularly for the mind, in different individuals. Catherine was undoubtedly precocious. Of a race and in a land and period in which maturity came early to all, she would earliest perhaps of any, perceive the shamefulness of things indecent and unclean, and the disgrace of frivolous and licentious conversation. But nothing in the story or writings of Catherine gives ground for a belief in our time, that at six years old, any special revelation was made to her of the design and necessity of sense-mortification.

That Catherine in later life had no remembrance of the direct sources of the little dramas that seemed to her to spring from her mind in completed form, is no proof that they did not come to being by the same processes that have similar results in the cases of other children. According to moods and opportunities of the moment, to the power and attraction of the exciting ideas, and to the natural inclinations and predilections of individuals, all children are given to acting parts, performing ceremonies, and setting out upon quests and adventures that seem to them all at the time, and to some for the rest of their lives, the most wonderful and original achievements.

Unlike the later and last great woman-saint of Christendom—Saint Theresa—Catherine could not read in childhood. She, therefore, obtained no inspirations from books. Theresa, however,

wrote of very early days of her life when she and a small brother, four years her senior, were close companions in many exploits and pursuits, "We were terrified when we read that pain and glory lasted for ever . . . we took pleasure in saying For ever, ever, ever." But it was rather from overheard talk and from sights and memorials around them in Avila in old Castille, that the Spanish saint and her brother, at six and ten years old, learned that one office of their neighbours, the Moors, was to provide an easy road of martyrdom for Christians desiring to pass from this world direct to heaven. So when their turn came to make the great adventure of childhood, they set out hand-in-hand for the country of the Moors, prudently carrying provisions for their journey with them. The expedition had an inglorious ending. Even before the bridge that led forth from the town of Avila was crossed, a vexatious meeting with an uncle on horseback resulted in their being taken home to their mother who, far from having thought their absence due to any high or holy stirrings, had only feared that, while idly romping, they had fallen down a well.

But no poring over written histories and romances stimulated the adventurous nature of Catherine of Siena. It was her own belief that, not by any human influence or teaching, was the desire excited in her to follow the manner of life of those Fathers of the Desert whose stories were familiar enough to the illiterate, as well as to the learned, in the Middle Ages, and must often have been referred to in suggestive snatches, if not recited at length, in the hearing of the children of the Sienese dyer,

in whose house wandering friars were constantly and hospitably entertained. The friars themselves, half hermits and half itinerants, would not certainly refrain from telling of their own pieties and adventures under the encouragements of sympathetic audiences and good cheer.

What then more natural than that, even without the instructions of books and pedagogues, the child of imagination and activity should set out one day in search of "some solitary place in the wilderness where she might serve God after the manner of the ancient hermits?" And even as the romantic yet practical Theresa, later in Spain, took food to sustain her until martyrdom should release her from all hunger for earthly meat, so the romantic and practical Catherine, earlier in Italy, carried a loaf for nourishment until such time as Heaven should send ravens to feed her or her fame as a solitary attract the admiring benevolent to her shrine.

Catherine's performance was more satisfactory than that of Theresa. She did not have to suffer the ignominy of reconduct. On the contrary, she made her way without hindrance beyond the city walls and came to a place of caves, such as the neighbourhood of Siena abounds in. As the houses in this locality did not stand close together, as in the *Contrada dell' Oca*, the little maid felt sure she had gained the wilderness. The place had, indeed, all the isolation and mystery of a wilderness for her. In an access of delight at the success of her endeavour, she knelt to thank God for the sign given her that her "good intention" for the hermit's calling had pleased the Lord of Heaven.

Praying there with fervour, and exhausted by her

rapid walk and its exciting ending, Catherine was thrown into a state of trance—whether "in the body or out of the body" how could she, any more than St Paul, in like condition, tell? Far longer than when stunned by the vision on the hill-top, she remained in the condition—cataleptic, epileptic, hypnotic, or what not—in which on this occasion she experienced also the sufficiently uncommon, but far from unique, sensation of being raised from the ground. The trance or sleep, to which her rapturous abandon gave the feeling of being lifted up and up, lasted until semi-consciousness of her situation kept her from mounting beyond the height of the cave which she could not wholly forget enclosed her. And so her imagination, and probably that of many repeaters of her tale, worked until it seemed to her that, little by little, she began to descend. It must have been an after-thought, the result of a later calculation, that gave her the hour of descent as that of "nine"—the same hour that Our Lord was taken down from the cross.

On the ground again, perhaps in moral as well as physical sensation, she came quickly to the conclusion that God did nor wish her to fix her abode in the cave. We do not know if she had eaten her loaf before she passed into ecstasy. She may or may not have been hungry, but, in any case, she was lonely, and evening was coming on. Fearful lest she should not reach the city gate before dark, and suddenly appalled by the recollection of the length of the way she had come from home to this spot—all the excitement over the novelty of the situation having died down, and body and nerves being wearied—she yet believed with touching

simplicity that God would protect her and carry her where she would be, if only she asked his aid.

Again on her knees, she prayed to be taken quickly home. Once more the dizzy sense that accompanies nervous seizures, gave her the feeling of being lifted. God sent a little cloud, she thought. There was a mist before her eyes, no doubt. With blurred vision, but of automatic impulse, she rose and hurriedly went back upon the steps she had taken in the morning. Not until the familiar city gate was passed, did full consciousness return. Then she ran on with the lithe speed that had helped her to her name "Euphrosyne." She grew anxious as she ran, lest her parents should be anxious. It was a little penitent of many compunctions, who came at last to the *Fullonica* and found—this perhaps was disconcerting—nobody at all alarmed. Far from imagining the child gone forth upon an adventurous quest, the home-folks had supposed her spending the day with her sister, Bonaventura, near whose house lay the gate beyond which Catherine had travelled so far in ecstatic experience from the customary path of humdrum family life.

CHAPTER III

CATHERINE grew apace—a bonny, wholesome, hearty child, to whom the surreptitious giving of some of her meat at dinner to her brother, or the throwing it on the floor for the dogs, brought no physical penalty. From the excess of her vitality, much could be spared for prayers, fasts and penances, even if they were as constant at this time as her early biographers, gratifying their own and their prospective readers' demands for "seraphic" characteristics, state. Indications are not wanting however—as in the stories of her going up the staircase in one bound when it was her intention to kneel on every step, and of her sudden return from the wilderness—of breakings out of childish impatience, and of protests of natural habits against religiously inflicted self-repressions. Patience came to be for Catherine a most highly valued virtue: it was not an inherent one.

Yet the child of free movement and adventurous disposition, the child who was frankly social and loved flowers and the twining of them into garlands and nosegays, was the child upon whom other beauties—those of oratory, music, ceremonial, pictures and statuary—were making impression. The Lord who had called her from the roof of San Domenico to a spiritual existence to be contained within the physical, and for whose pleasing she so early sought ways of becoming holier and better, was truly enshrined for her in the Church

established in her place and day. What the Church taught and inculcated and designed could not be questioned by her. It was natural to Catherine to believe. It is natural to no child to doubt. The young intellect questions, but accepts, and with eagerness, all answers given authoritatively. Illiterate Catherine had only the life around her—supreme in which were the influences and pronouncements of ecclesiastics and the Roman ecclesiastical system—to give answer to her questions. There was short shrift for little babblers in the family life in her day. Fathers and mothers had no time to reply to presumptuous interrogations. Catherine had to inquire with eyes and ears, and nowhere could answers be had for her inquisitiveness, so many and so clear, as those given her in church.

Sermons, then as now, would proclaim the virtue of gentle words and kindly acts. Legends abounded in which givers of alms, tenders of the sick and helpers of the poor, received very special blessings. The good Samaritan would be known to Catherine by reference if not by pictorial representation. She would have heard of the Shepherd, and seen His portraits, who gathers His lambs in His arms. And so, because it was her impulse to look up and to look far; not to grovel in street-play nor in chatter with dolly-headed playmates, still less in little underhand indecencies of thought or deed that degrade, even now, too much of child-life, it came about that the soul of this woman-child expanded into a casket of many moral excellences, and in her mind was spun a web of many religious ideas. She was ever as alert as the young Samuel.

"Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth" might be called the watchword of her constant attitude. And to hear with Catherine was to obey.

The first alarm to her family of the singular virtue of this youngest but one, seems to have come on a day when she was sent by her mother to the Church of St Anthony to ask the priest to say a Mass, and to offer on the altar of the greatly tempted one some money and candles. Catherine fulfilled her errand, and remained for the Mass. Such devotion in one so young had not been expected, and she returned to find her mother in a very different mood from that in which she had received her daughter on the day on which she had scampered back from the cave. Lapa was voluble with the local idiom of impatience and annoyance. "Cursed be the tongues that said my daughter should come no more!" she cried. The words to Catherine were literal, not idiomatic. They wounded the daughter of Giacomo Benincasa, new come from the sublime stillness of contemplation of the Mass. She considered for a moment, then drew her mother aside, begging her if ever again she, her child, offended, she might be beaten with a rod, rather than that man or woman should be cursed for her faults. Lapa surmounted the embarrassment of the situation by asking Catherine where she had been. On hearing that the child had only stayed to hear the Mass she had been sent to ask for, we read that the mother was "greatly edified." The incident was related to Giacomo in the evening, and it is said both father and mother gave thanks to God for the daily increasing signs of grace and prudence in their child.

Yet however edified and thankful for these early tokens of Catherine's goodness, neither parent considered that the grace in her was of a kind to constitute a divine difference between her and their other children. They had in view for their youngest but one, exactly the same destiny they had brought their other daughters up to. When Catherine came to be twelve years old, they busied themselves with preparations for her marriage. These preparations consisted, until a husband should be found, in denying her many freedoms of childhood, in keeping her much within doors and behind curtained windows, and in teaching her certain arts of toilet considered proper for marriageable girls. Although few harem-like restrictions were imposed on the wives of Siena—the married women of that hill-top town being allowed a more public part in life than was permitted to matrons of many other Italian cities both in that and in a later time—the Sienese maidens awaiting matrimony, were expected to affect certain timidities and shames not demanded of them at other periods of their lives. At the same time, they were called upon to dress themselves attractively.

The natural resentment of a clever young girl who dreams, because she cannot help it, of a career of her own and resists, of instinct, a disposition of her life which ignores her inclinations, would have made Catherine object to paint her cheeks, dye her hair, and generally deck herself for the sacrifice of an earthly marriage, even if she had not already offered herself in a sacrifice of heavenly union.

In the accounts of Catherine voluntarily retiring

from windows and deliberately avoiding chance meetings with her father's apprentices, we seem to see the proud *farouche* girl, too young as yet to feel any definite sex attraction, yet conscious—because she was an Italian and of the Middle Ages—of much of the physical demand of wedlock which in a child of to-day would seem incompatible with her years, resisting her parents' plans concerning her, because of a natural maiden pride. But biographers—whether early or late—themselves in bondage to the mediæval cult, attribute all her rebellion against the accepted marriage customs of her day, to the vow she had made. This vow was certainly not forgotten, but she was also under no temptation to abandon it. An actual marriage was not yet sufficiently imminent to drive her to disclose the secret promise of her childhood, so for a time the hot independence of the waxing girl was her chief guard against a forced betrothal.

Meanwhile, her resistance to powder, hair-dye and other insignia of the time's fashion and her marriageability, was overpowered. Her beloved married sister—Bonaventura—prevailed by coaxings where her mother's directions had failed. But even such slight surrender of maiden integrity did not last long. The yielding truly was on her sister's persuasions, yet for a little while some vanity was stirred, some self-love gratified by the display of her bright, chestnut hair, the dye on which must have made it as refined gold, gilded. For a little while, gay colours and dainty garments proclaimed to all Siena that Catherine Benincasa was a woman waiting for a husband, and, moreover, a woman to whom the world's vanities were not a sealed

book. But beneath the garments and cosmetics of fashion, Catherine's heart beat miserably and her cheeks flushed shamefully. Her trouble was told to a confessor. To prove the reality of her compunction, he bade her crop with her own hand the bright tresses, the glory of which was indeed a nimbus of the worldly state she had been persuaded to. Without a pause, much less a demur, the locks fell one by one, by Catherine's own cutting. Here was a sensation for the Benincasa family! Here a high misdemeanour of the *enfant terrible!* Then Catherine, bewailing not so much the vanities into which she had been led, as the fact that she had followed a creature's guidance and forsaken her Creator's, declared her early vow and present desire to live and die in religion; to take no spouse but the one Heavenly Bridegroom.

Now Giacomo and Lapa, though Christians, were sensible people. They would not yield to a young girl's hysteria. They knew human nature and the needs of womanhood, and they had seen their daughter as pretty and attractive as any girl in town. Besides her sunny hair, Catherine had eyes wide, tender, flashing; her face was a good oval, her features not too irregular and of sufficient refinement. And then her ways and manners were of such grace and attraction that, for them alone, she might have been named beautiful. Moreover, as Lapa long boasted, Catherine, before she began her serious penances, was as healthy and robust a human creature as man could wish to see. That such a girl should not marry and have healthy, robust children; that such a girl, for all her devotion to religion, should go into seclusion and become as

one dead among her fellows, was not to be imagined, unless, indeed, that girl's intention had been hardly proved. She had been too much indulged, her parents thought. Perhaps they knew of other designs resembling that journey to the cave, of which she had so soon tired. In any case, they were not convinced of her "vocation." The gaiety of her ways had always been too noticeable for a great seriousness to be attributed to her thoughts.

So Catherine entered into persecution. It is meet for a saint to have gone through persecution, therefore much has been made of the hardships her parents advisedly inflicted on her. But it is not on account of the cruelty of foes of her own household; not indeed by persecutions of a common physical kind at all, that Catherine deserves her saintly fame. To a girl of active intellect, visionary mind and artist soul, it was necessarily a trial to be given all a servant's work. To have to sweep and clean the house and wait on the household, when she would fain have been pondering, rhapsodising and painting to herself fair temporary visions of eternal things, could not but have been a penance greater than those which, in deep desire and of high intention, she came to inflict most mercilessly on her delicate body.

The ordeal was a definite and trying one, but Catherine emerged triumphantly. It was not that through all hardships and pains she preserved sullenly her determination and hardened in her decisions, as she obeyed with literal exactitude every order of her parents. No, Catherine Benincasa had better ways of doing things than that. She could not but be sunny. To be miserable for

the sake of tasting misery, much less to despair in the face of difficulties, was not her way of proving herself a Christian.

Since her devotions were interrupted and her pious offices prevented, she made of each household task a devotion and an office that gave to all the full sanctity and interest of religious ceremonials. She pictured to herself her father and her mother as the Saviour Christ and the Blessed Madonna; her brothers, sisters and others as the apostles and disciples. The kitchen was a holy of holies where sacrifices were offered up, as indeed they were, since the "sacrifice of God is a cheerful spirit," and it is admitted that Catherine performed the most menial tasks cheerfully, and kept secret the conceit whereby she lightened them. The result of the sacrifice rendered so completely and so joyously, was the conquest of the family of Benincasa.

That she had not been altogether debarred from religious exercises is proved by the fact that she was allowed, even during the day, to steal away for prayer to the room she shared at night with her brother, Stephen. It was when kneeling there, after her probation had endured some time, that her father beheld a dove hovering over her bowed head. At his coming the bird took flight through the window by which it had probably entered. Catherine, abstracted in prayer, had neither seen nor heard the dove. This, to the good Giacomo, was a sign. No bird but the Holy Spirit had hovered above his child Henceforth she was free for her vocation. In the eyes of her father, at least, her saintliness was proved.

BOOK II

"The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband."—1 Cor. xxii. 34.

CHAPTER IV

And now Catherine was truly to enter a period of probation, was actually to begin to live. She was about sixteen years old. All that had gone before of emprise or intention was, more or less, the make-believe of childhood. Even those many months when the rough and heavy work of the home had been demanded of her with rougher words and heavier blows—for it is not to be supposed that the usual beatings, whereby not only servants but children and wives were then trained up in the way they should go, were spared her—had been months of mummery, albeit of a mummery that was grim. It had not been the intention of Giacomo and Lapa to make a daughter of theirs a permanent domestic drudge either in their own house or in that of others. The test of Catherine's earnestness in her religious professions had been more or less capriciously applied and it is very probable that while submitting with the sweetness and grace that made her saintliness, and while, because of conscientiousness, doing her tasks with assiduity and effort down to their least detail, she was all the time assured that hers was the stronger determination and must in the end prevail.

So well do clever children know their parents!

How often are not fathers' and mothers' characters weighed in the balance of a child's unsuspected observation and their strength measured by the span of that insistence of youth which, sometimes because it is so much more selfish, and sometimes only because it is young, so far outstretches the indulgence it presumes on. In any case, the time of Catherine's domestic servitude was so conditioned as to be more or less a servitude of make-believe. She was acting a part and her parents were acting a part. All had a definite end in view—the parents the end of a good match for their daughter, Catherine the end of the religious life—which they desired to hasten and there is the evidence of the earlier, more happy-go-lucky methods of Giacomo and Lapa to prove that much of their harshness must have been assumed with difficulty. As for Catherine, the exuberant imagination which remained always hers and was a special attribute of her youth, impelled her to make gay fantasy of a situation which, though it had its pains, was too transparent a device of mock warfare in a really united household, to be treated as a true experience.

But experience and proof of a different kind were at hand.

Catherine entered religion. A "cell" in her father's house—a basement room, five metres long and three in width—was given over to her for her devotions. To this cell she retired for three years, and in it she set herself to tread the penible way of saintship as understood and practised in the Middle Ages. Here she put on the hair-shirt and chain-girdle next her skin, here she lay on a plank-bed with a log of wood, or the brick steps that led up

to the one small window, for her pillow during the few hours' sleep she allowed herself just before dawn. Here, three times a day, she flogged herself till the blood coursed over her bare shoulders. Here she starved herself, reducing her diet by degrees to a few herbs or vegetables, some tiny morsels of bread and a few draughts of water. Here, in fact, taking the convent laws of the primitive Dominicans as her guides, she played havoc with the superb health and physique that were hers by nature and—as her mother pitifully lamented—was changed from a robust and healthy creature into a form so attenuated and wasted that it was indeed a miracle how her ardent spirit could still be confined in so immaterial a prison, could still burn in, without consuming, such a withered bush of flesh. With eagerness and zeal her mind remained aflame. Hers was a most indomitable physique, as hers was a most indomitable will. In her too was that pride which sounded in the words of St Paul when he spoke as one beside himself and boasted of labours, stripes, prisons and deaths more abundant than those of other ministers of Christ.

But whereas with the Great Apostle these things, though accepted and rejoiced in, came unavoidably as incidents in a marvellous career of usefulness, and were trials that not without cowardice or betrayal of trust could be escaped, with Catherine, at this time, the pains were sought for the sake of their own virtue, and because she had the instruction of her Church, and of much legendary lore, that by the gratuitous infliction of many bodily punishments on one, spiritual blessing for many may be gained.

It was impossible for a girl like Catherine, not

being an original, although imaginative, and of keen and quick, rather than of great and profound, intellect, to hold any other view at a time when she had learned so little from personal experience and when, with all her precocity, she had still to attain to maturity of mind.

The same distorted and shadowed views of the great doctrine of the Atonement exist to-day and are exemplified not only in the lives of women gathered into the still surviving mediæval institutions, known as convents and sisterhoods, but in the practices, devotions and undertakings of many of the essentially youthful of all ages, who, aiming at perfection and desiring to serve, are impelled into excesses of devotion which undermine health and tend eventually to limit sympathy, activity and comprehension. It is true, eternally true, that, by the sufferings of one, many may be made righteous, but those sufferings must be incidental to worthy effort on behalf of the many and not officiously manufactured in ghastly mimicry of woes some time heroically endured as needed testimonies to truth or as parts of some genuine effort for the common good.

It may be thought that, since the tendency of this later time—the tendency of Protestantism and of all the working principles and delusions of modern thought and idea—is towards the preservation of health, the development of strength, the avoidance of physical ills and even towards the elevation to altars of worship of the worshippers' own bodies, that there is no parity between the disciplines of St Catherine of Siena and the religious practices of the women of this time. Not so. Apart from the fact that the mediæval conventual

system still survives and still attracts and that the practices of both extreme Protestants and extreme Catholics show men and women still fain to prove their virtue in works of supererogation, rather than to show it forth in essentially right living, it is also true that to every girl of serious mind, on the threshold of her career, comes the enticement to believe that her self-elected endurances and observations have a directer influence for good, and are a greater factor in the scheme of things, than any sufferings and practices incidental to ordinary life can have or be. Yet the instruction of the penances of Catherine Benincasa is not that endurances and disciplines are of no avail, or that it is the office of wisdom to decry them. The call to the modern woman who would develop her womanhood, from the Saint of Mediævalism who cultivated her sainthood, is *prune yourself, purge yourself, subdue yourself*, by physical means and by mental, by abstinences from things inexpedient and unprofitable, as well as from things unlawful; by prayer, by self-denial, by entering into a cell of self-knowledge in the very midst of home life.

And who shall say that the call of St Catherine's girlhood is not the call of wisdom for all girls? According to her light, and in response to the best teaching she knew, Catherine entered on the strait path of self-discipline. Her ears were open to the Voice ringing down the ages: "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."

There is much virtue in an "if." Its particular

virtue in this passage of Scripture has been often overlooked. Catherine perhaps overlooked it, though it may have been that there was a turbulence in her flesh little dreamed of by those who noted only her spirit's firmness. But if she did not overlook the monosyllable she disregarded the implied counter-idea that it is still more profitable if the eye can be kept from offending and the whole body of a Christian—that is, the complete individual with all physical, mental and moral powers belonging to individuality—be saved to enter Life Eternal.

Nevertheless it is better to be maimed and saved than preserved whole for damnation. Yet in mental and moral, as well as in material, things there may be too much tinkering, too much patching up and compromising. This latter age is not one in which the injunction "pluck it out and cast it from thee," as applied to offending thoughts, habits and tastes, can be despised. Moral amputations, when seen to be necessary, should be at least as quick and thorough as the feats of modern material surgery. It is better to lose a member of these wonderfully co-ordinated personalities of ours than to preserve a rotting one that shall eventually contaminate the others; better to surrender a friendship, to starve a taste, to abandon a habit, not vicious in itself and appealing to us perhaps as a sign of width of sympathy, breadth of view or independence of thought, which nevertheless, because of some individual predilection or idiosyncrasy, has become a vehicle of corruption to our souls.

Although in the times and in the writings of Catherine, the dawn of modern views may be

descried, her days were the immediate heirs of that Middle Age of Christian history and Thought development, when many priest-imposed dogmas made of celibacy a transcendent virtue. The mere form, nay the mere pretence, of virginity had then a rank second to none among Christian excellences. Undoubtedly celibacy may be profitable to the celibate and to the community of which he or she forms a part. "The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit; but she that is married, careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband."

The question as to whether it is a good thing for a nation, for the school training of its girls to be entirely in the hands of spinsters, is one capable of much debate, although, in view of the fact that no sufficient detachment of wives is ever likely to be available for the amount of educational work to be done by women, it is perhaps rather a consideration for the curious than an argument whereof the discussion will bear fruit. The same remarks apply to the carrying on by unmarried women of much of the religious, philanthropic and generally curative work of the world. In all reverence, therefore, the Scriptural words may be paraphrased as, "The unmarried woman careth for the things of the community, that she may be useful and productive in all mental and spiritual senses, but she that is married careth for the things of the home, how she may make glad the lives of husband and children."

To some, in time—apart from all physical conditions—comes the call of virginity, upon others

among women of our modern, monogamous states, the condition of maidenhood is imposed, and there are many to-day—maids elective and of the accident of circumstance—against whose law of virtue the body is no rebel or, at most, an insurgent so feeble that its subjugation is scarcely to be regarded as a task. But there are others in whom nature is more arrogant. Such a one was Catherine Benincasa.

Pledged by a childish vow before she could have been sensible of any true temptations of the flesh, to devote her virginity to the Heavenly Bridegroom's service, the talk and commotion over the earthly marriage she resisted, seems to have wakened in her many longings and fancies, which shamed her purity and afflicted her daintiness of soul. There must always be one moment in the awakening of normal womanhood when modesty is rudely shocked and the maiden spirit flinches. Catherine was of passionate nature, of passionate soul and mind. Upon what she loved, her whole being was poured out. To Him she honoured, every power was brought low. It was impossible for Catherine to divide interests, to serve two masters. Hers was no anæmic body to be given coldly to a husband selected for her, while her soul flamed for the King of Heaven. Hers was no half-hearted spirit to respond dully to the calls of God, while her natural being spent itself in devotions to children and a home. Not because of insensitiveness to the joys of married life did Catherine flee to her cell and in vigils, fasts and macerations purify herself—free her spirit from the prison of its material tabernacle, put upon it wings to soar—but because of her impulse towards the Highest, of her love for all

God's "rational creatures" and because of the undivided passionateness and infinite depth of devotion with which such a heart as hers must have beaten for any husband after the flesh, to whom she had made surrender of her earlier maiden dreams.

With consciousness of the weakness and of the warmth of her woman's nature as of her special temperament, Catherine threw herself into the warfare against the flesh which, in one form or another, cannot be shirked by any woman of ideals, and particularly by one who would subjugate natural longing to that "holy desire" which is, in essence, the woman's instinct—the desire of motherhood. For what is "holy desire" but the impulse to offer self as a ransom for many, the longing to bring many sons unto glory, the ambition to make earth for those living at one's side, as well as for those who shall come after, a happier place of sojourn than the warrior against flesh found it? A "holy desire" too is the anxiety to render the race itself worthier to inherit life, whether it be only the life of this world or that Life which Christians call the Life Eternal.

The method by which Catherine did battle against self was the method appointed by the ecclesiastical authorities of her own and preceding generations, the method which, with all its extremities, no religious teacher of her time, whether lay or cleric, doubted was the only method whereby the world, the flesh and the devil might be subdued and which it was believed had the sanction of the Worker of Miracles who said, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." True it

is that only by worship and abnegation, by devotion and denial, can the faith which removes mountains be nourished. Yet the grace and virtue of Catherine were not shown specially in her choice of the life called religious, or in her throwing herself into the career that involved—although the vows were not formally taken—a life-pledge of poverty, chastity and obedience. The saintliness of the saint was rather proved by the way in which she endured her self-appointed trial, by the courage which came to her to own the faults of discipline and to acknowledge the snares of contemplation.

Hemmed in by tradition and held down by custom, it required greater brain-power, wider knowledge and a nature more iconoclastic than the ardent maid of Siena possessed, to hew out a path of sanctity that would not have followed, at least for a certain distance, the track of the bleeding foot-steps of the many virgins, accounted pious, who, in the inebriation of their self-conceit and the mad-ness of their ambition to be adored as saints, had set themselves deliberately to pass through fire and walk on ploughshares. The girl Catherine had not the genius to perceive all the perversion of the judgment, common in her day, that God could be more honoured and better pleased by the self-inflicted lacerations of ecstatics than by the foot-sore weariness of those who trod with long devotion the path of ordinary, homely duty.

She had not that genius, yet she had genius—the genius of her singlemindedness, of her holy desire and her right intention. Truly in Catherine was exemplified the law: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." She did the

will which every influence of her time and training pointed out to her as God's will and she came to know of the doctrine—whether it was of God or whether it was of man. For by laborious and —as it must seem to the modern mind—almost murderous processes, she arrived at the judgment that the fasts, disciplines, meditations and self-punishments of the life termed specifically "religious," have only the uses of processes and are never to be sought or honoured as ends in themselves. I have said that she arrived at this judgment by processes which involved the exhaustion and the overthrow of vital forces, the destruction of physique and the undermining of health. Rather should it be said that she came to her later views in spite of the self-abnegations and self-tortures which the zeal and ardour of her were bound to make extreme. And in this lies the wonder of Catherine's character. She triumphed not only over appetite, but over asceticism; not only over ease, repose and every luxury, but over sleeplessness and hysteria; over vacuity and perversions of natural habit and function.

In the light of such a triumph as was hers, we cannot say that denials are unnecessary and demands of the bodily nature so imperious that, unless they be fully gratified, peril to the mind and injury to the judgment must ensue.

On the contrary, reducing the intensity and exuberance of Catherine to the average capacity and force of girlhood, her triumph proves the need of processes of self-discipline in youth and vindicates the emphatic call to womanhood to turn from indulgences of flesh and set the affections on things above.

Hair-shirts, brick-pillows, steel-girdles, castigations, long vigils and long fasts are relics of ages of superstition that have no true office in our days of fuller enlightenment. But there were adorers of Catherine in her lifetime—there are adorers now, so hard do superstitions die—for whom the atmosphere of a basement-cell, of which the window and door were kept always shut, and wherein an oil lamp burned night and day before a crucifix and images of the Virgin and other saints, was an atmosphere necessarily sanctifying to one dwelling in it. There were and are worshippers at her shrine who would think her without title to be raised to any altar, whether of the Catholic Church or a heart's devotion, unless there were to be believed of her certain stories of miraculous works, such as her sudden healing by touch of the "Sister" crushed all but to death, beneath a fallen building, her causing wine to issue from an empty cask, her falling into fires without being burned and—more marvellous still—her sitting down on eggs without the messy results of natural consequence.

Catherine herself was not one like unto these. It took time and experience to teach her that God desires not sacrifice and offering and that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams," but she learned the lesson well at last. Her own words prove it. In a letter to a Brother Matteo "of the order of preachers," she wrote: "We cannot be of any profit to God just as we cannot love Him of grace without duty. For we are bound to Him, and not He to us, because before He was loved, He loved us, and therefore created us in His image and likeness. There it is, then:

we cannot be of any profit to Him, nor love Him with this first love. Yet I say that God demands of us, that as He has loved us without any second thoughts, so He should be loved by us. In what way can we do this, then, since He demands it of us, and we cannot give it him? I tell you: through a means which He has established, by which we can love Him freely, and without the least regard to any profit of ours; that is, we can be useful, not to Him, which is impossible, but to our neighbour. Now by this means we can obey what He demands of us for the glory and praise of His name; to show the love that we have for Him, we ought to serve and love every rational creature, and extend our charity to good and bad, to every kind of people, as much to one who does us ill service and criticises us, as to one who serves us. For God is no respecter of persons, but of holy desires, and His charity extends over just men and sinners."

And again, to a "Mantellata of Saint Dominic called Catarina di Scetto," Catherine wrote (it was a frequent theme) of the impossibility of being of profit to God except by means of our neighbour:

"Servants we ought to be, because we are bought with His blood. But I do not see that we can be of any profit to Him by our service; we ought then to be of profit to our neighbour, because he is the means by which we test and gain virtue. Thou knowest that every virtue receives life from love; and love is gained in love, that is, by raising the eye of our mind to behold how much we are beloved of God. Seeing ourselves loved, we cannot do otherwise than love; loving Him we shall em-

brace virtue through the force of love, and shall hate vice and spurn it.

"So thou seest that we conceive virtues through God, and bring them to birth for our neighbours. Thou knowest well that for the necessity of thy neighbour, thou bringest forth the child charity, that is within thy soul, and patience in the wrongs which thou receivest from him. Thou givest him prayer, particularly to those who have done thee wrong. And thus we ought to do; if men are untrue to us, we ought to be true to them, and faithfully to seek their salvation; loving them of grace, and not by barter. That is, do thou beware not to love thy neighbour for thine own profit; for that would not be faithful love, and thou wouldst not respond to the love which God bears thee. For as God has loved thee of grace, so He wills that since thou canst not return this love to Him, thou return it to thy neighbour, loving him of grace and not by barter, as I said."

And words of Catherine in later life, concerning the virtue of discretion, and the vice of indiscretion, are also significant of the processes of her soul's development. She was writing to "Sister Daniella of Orvieto clothed with the habit of Saint Dominic who not being able to carry out her great penances had fallen into deep affliction," and she said of discretion, "The first rule it gives to the soul is . . . to render honour to God, goodwill to one's neighbour, and to oneself, hatred of sin and of one's own fleshliness. It regulates this charity towards the neighbour; for it is not willing to sacrifice the soul to him, since, in order to do him good or pleasure, it is not willing to offend

God; but it flees from guilt discreetly, yet holds its body ready for every pain and torment, even to death, to rescue a soul, and as many souls as it can, from the hands of the devil. Also, it is ready to give up all its temporal possessions to help and rescue the body of its neighbour. Charity does this, when enlightened with discretion; for discretion should regulate one's charity to one's neighbour. The indiscreet man does just the contrary, who does not mind offending God, or sacrificing his soul, to serve or please his neighbour—sometimes by keeping him company in wicked places, sometimes by bearing false witness, or in many others ways, as happens every day. This is the rule of indiscretion, which proceeds from pride and perverse self-love and the blindness of not having known oneself or God.

"And when measure and rule have been found in regard to charity to the neighbour, discretion regulates also the matter which keeps the soul in that charity and makes it grow—that is in faithful, humble and continual prayer; robing the soul in cloak of desire for virtue, that it may not be injured by lukewarmness, negligence, or self-love, spiritual or temporal: therefore it inspires the soul with this desire for virtue, that its desire may not be placed on anything by which it might be deceived.

"Also it rules and orders the creature physically, in this way: the soul which is prepared to wish for God makes its beginning as we have said, but because it has the vessel of its body, enlightened discretion must impose a rule on this, as it has done upon the soul, since the body ought to be a means for the increase of virtue. The rule withdraws it

from the indulgences and luxuries of the world and the conversation of worldlings; gives it conversation with the servants of God; takes it from dissolute places, and keeps it in places that stimulate devotion. It imposes restraint on all the members of the body, that they be modest and temperate: let the eye not look where it should not, but hold before itself earth and heaven; let the tongue flee idle and vain speech, and be disciplined to proclaim the word of God, for the salvation of the neighbour, and to confess its sins; let the ear flee agreeable, flattering, dissolute words, and any words of detraction that might be said to it; and let it hearken for the word of God, and the need of the neighbour, willingly listening to his necessity. So let the hand be swift in touching and working, and the feet in going: to all, discretion gives a rule. And that the perverse law of the flesh that fights against the spirit may not throw these tools into disorder, it imposes a rule upon the body, mortifying it with vigil, fast and other exercises which are all meant to bridle our body.

"But note, that all this is done, not indiscreetly, but with enlightened discretion. How is this shown? In this: *that the soul does not place its chief desire in any act of penance.*[1] That it may not fall into such a fault as to take penance for its chief desire, enlightened discretion takes pains to robe the soul in the desire for virtue. Penance to be sure must be used as a tool, in due times and places, as need may be. If the flesh, being too strong, kicks against the spirit, penance takes the rod of discipline, and fast, and the cilice of many buds, and mighty

[1] The italics are mine.—J. D. R.

vigils; and places burdens enough on the flesh that it may be more subdued. But if the body is weak, fallen into illness, the rule of discretion does not approve of such a method. Nay not only should fasting be abandoned, but flesh be eaten; if once a day is not enough, then four times. If one cannot stand up, let him stay on his bed; if he cannot kneel, let him sit or lie down, as he needs. This discretion demands. Therefore it insists that penance be trusted as a means and not as a chief desire.

"Dost thou know why it must not be chief? That the soul may not serve God with a thing that can be taken from it and that is finite; but with holy desire, which is infinite, through its union with the infinite desire of God; and with the virtues which neither devil nor fellow-creature, nor weakness can take from us, unless we choose. Herein, must we make our foundation and not in penance. Nay in weakness, the virtue of patience may be tested; in vexing conflicts with devils, fortitude and long perseverance; and in adversities suffered from our fellow-beings, humility, patience, and charity. So as to all other virtues—God lets them be tested by many contraries, but never taken from us, unless we choose. Herein, must we make our foundation, and not in penance. The soul cannot have two foundations: either the one or the other must be overthrown. Let the thing which is not the chief, be used as a means. If I find my chief principle in bodily penance, I build the city of my soul upon the sand, so that each little breeze throws it to the earth, and no building can be erected on it. But if I build upon the virtues, founded upon

the Living Stone, Christ, sweet Jesus, there is no building so great that it will not stand firmly, nor wind so contrary that it can ever blow it down."

These words of sagacity and sense came from the same Catherine who in her hot youth chastised herself three times a day with a "discipline of iron chains, garnished with sharp points; the first time for her own sins; the second time for the souls of others and the third time for the dead." They are from the same Catherine too who, when her anxious mother insisted on taking her for a summer outing to the baths of Vignone, in the hope that the healthful air and treatment there would renovate the young form worn by sharp austerities, deliberately scalded herself with the hot, sulphurous water, thinking that thereby she not only pleased her Heavenly Spouse and proved her powers of endurance, but also that, by thus taking upon herself a new and extreme kind of suffering, she was discounting for others more deserving of them the penalties of hell-fire.

CHAPTER V

In many histories of Catherine, we may read accounts of the hand-to-hand battles she fought with parental fondness and social prejudice, even after her father's consent to her religious dedication had been given. Before she was allowed to give herself completely to the mode of life in which alone, as she believed, she could find blessedness, she had to pit device against device to overcome her mother's natural objections to her lying on hard boards at night instead of in a comfortable bed, and was forced to endure the noisy lamentations of that same unregenerate mother over her persistent self-castigations. It was not given to philistine Monna Lapa—as it is happily not given to mothers in general—to see the spiritual loveliness of such injury of natural beauty as Catherine, with her eyes on far visions, inflicted without mercy on her near flesh.

Every home-reared girl with sense of a mission or ambition for a career, has such a battle to fight as Catherine waged. And, though the test of the right to fight it, lies finally in the issue, much may be gained for character in the fighter, and for edification of all concerned, by adoption of right methods of warfare. As has been shown, there was nothing morose about Catherine ; neither was she inflated with pride nor, for all her secret communings, did deceitfulness dwell in her. Yet from all feminine petulance and contriving she was not

throughly purged. It was her ardent wish not only to pass her days in solitary meditation and devotion in the "cell" her father put at her disposal in his own house, but also to be admitted —all young as she was—to the third order of penance of St Dominic. Of this order, the sisters were called, popularly, the *Mantellate*, and in Catherine's time were all wives and widows of mature age, who, without enclosure or specific vows, lived lives of devotion and charity in their own homes, under the rule of a prioress, who followed the direction of the friars.

It is significant that, even in the earliest days of her great enthusiasm for service and devotion, Catherine, after meditating long on the virtues of the various religious rules, had a vision of Father Dominic himself, holding out to her the most familiar habit of this uncloistered order. In no account of her life is she credited with having the anterior thought that her voluntary solitude would be of short duration and her truest life's devotions be paid in busy crowded places. Nevertheless, Catherine may, from the first, have looked upon her retirement as a preparation for activity—a forty days in the wilderness from which she would emerge for service. This may have been, but it is more natural to the girl she was, and at her age then, to have thought of little beyond the hour; to have been carried by the impulse of a passionate devotion to the point of desiring self-immolation. So temperate in her judgment of others as she was instinctively, and ever remained, for herself she knew no medium courses. The longing of her girl-heart was for absolute self-

surrender and that surrender to be complete in her eyes had to be made under the greatest pains and penalties. It was not to escape the rule of obedience prevailing in convents, but to follow it by the most difficult path, that it would be like Catherine to desire for herself an order in which discipline would be the more penible because it would have to be self-applied, and devotion the harder because of it having to be paid amid distractions that cannot intrude into secluded community life.

However it was, to wear the black mantle of humility and the white habit, veil and wimple of purity, which made the uniform of the third order of sisters of St Dominic, was her dear desire. Knowing that, as a young and marriageable girl, her own request for admittance to the order could meet only with refusal, she begged her mother to be her advocate. Lapa was loth to assist her daughter to irrevocable steps. She had all the suspicions of youth's changeability which are natural to maturity and she knew probably that Catherine was impressionable, that all her states of feeling did not last. But in this desire Catherine had found herself. She was sure that in the Mantellate garb and rule lay help and strength for the espousals to which she was already pledged. Petulance and contriving showed themselves when Catherine, physically weakened by an illness caused partly by her desperate act of self-scalding at the baths and made worse by a febrile complaint of the nature of smallpox, played upon her mother's anxiety with the assertion that God and St Dominic would take her out of this world altogether, unless there could be obtained for her the coveted mantle and habit.

So Lapa went at last to make the representations her child so urgently besought. After much hesitation a deputation of sisters came to see the postulant. The ravages of her illness having been great, they decided that Catherine was not too good-looking and of a sufficient piety, for admission to their order.

It is possible that, in her hour of depression from illness and at the period of her girl-life when sentimental wants seem the most imperative, Catherine really thought she would die if her request were not granted. But in the light of many other histories of girlhood, as lived now and in past times, it appears more likely that the method by which Catherine finally prevailed over her mother's objections was not without its touch of human naughtiness. Catherine's chastening came —as it comes to many peevish ones—in the attaining of her heart's desire.

Of a strong will, she acquired the special grace of taking rebuffs sweetly and the habit of veiling tenacity in a manner of gentleness. But in youth, at least, she never rested till she had her way. By her, as by others, the lesson that God's ways are not as our ways, had to be learned. It was Catherine's glory that she studied it deeply when it came to be presented to her. But at seventeen she had not mastered it though, like many another ardent maiden starting out on a chosen career, she undoubtedly felt that she had solved life's problem when, about the year 1364, in the Church of San Domenico, she was vested with the greatly desired habit, mantle and veil according to the customary form and in the presence of many brethren and sisters of the order into which she entered.

This ceremony had had the prelude of a vision; the vision in its turn had been preceded by a revulsion of feeling—that reaction which comes by a law of nature to the self-willed and ardently imaginative, when pet desires are fulfilled and special difficulties that have blocked the way, removed. The girl who had scorned not only the bridegroom of her parents' choice, but all idea of an earthly marriage, had been seized in secret with "a violent desire to go forth and show herself abroad, dressed not only in the gay attire commonly worn by girls in her day, but in the more luxurious costume which, at that time, was adopted by newly-married women." According to the original account, as rendered in English by Mrs Drane, this desire had been stirred in her by the apparition—as she prayed in her cell before the crucifix—of the spirit of evil. Satan came before her in a pleasing, rather than in a terrifying, form, holding forth for her acceptance rich garments of finest silk.

But if her vision had not been terrifying, Catherine was terrified by its revelation of herself. Gazing into the abyss of her heart's darkness, she saw that all love of adornment and pride of self were not dead within her. Mixed with her long desire to be altogether clothed with righteousness; to have no garments for her body save those that conceal the natural form and typify the spirit's mould, there had been, perhaps, some liking for singularity, some design of winning admiration for the distinction of a garb that is professedly a uniform of self-effacement. In any case, Catherine's chastening had begun. It was mortifying to find in herself some vanity and an inclination towards

luxurious living. But her hand was on the plough, she would not look back. On the contrary, she faced her dilemma steadily. She prayed not for deliverance, but for strength to overcome. "As she prayed," so runs the relation of Mrs Drane, "there appeared to her our Blessed Lady, who showed her a garment of dazzling richness, which she had drawn out of that casket of all treasures, the wounded side of her Divine Son. And as she clothed Catherine with this inestimable robe, she said to her, 'My daughter, know this, that the garments drawn from the side of my Son surpass in beauty all that can be fashioned by the hand of man!'"

So in much heart searching and by the aid of an intellectual vision exceptionally keen, because ever most assiduously exercised, did Catherine give her devotion finally to the spiritual things that are of greater beauty and truer lustre than material.

By a similar process did she attain to the subjugation of self in fulfilment of the vow of chastity.

Catherine had taken this vow without counting the full cost of it. Not only in her childhood, when she had repeated it as the childish ever repeat a charm against evil, with no grasp of its actual meaning, but also when she renewed it, by intention and implication, on taking the veil of sisterhood and retiring to her chamber of immolation, she had not thought of the pledge as involving surrender of things naturally dear. It had figured for her only a glorious choice. To guard herself against the importunities of parents and elder sisters and the demands of convention, to say nothing of the approaches of a possible suitor in person, Catherine had fenced

herself in with rules and conditions of life and dressed herself in a certain livery of virginity. Having done this, and having, as it seemed to her by the instruction of the Queen of Heaven herself, apprehended the incomparable beauty of holiness and the superlative value of the ornaments of a meek and quiet spirit, she felt herself safe. Nothing could now disturb the serenity of ceaseless contemplation ; nothing now prevent the ecstasies into which, by a process of what we of later date may call self-hypnotism, she sank from time to time deliciously and at will.

Penance, prayer and ecstasy, these filled the round of the hours for Catherine in her cell. Chastisement to satisfy her conscience and, as she hoped, to compensate for sins committed by the ignorant. Prayer to keep herself steadfast, to gain favours from Heaven and to fill up the gaps in the supplications of the Dominican friars, so that intercession from the order might be perpetual. And then delicious evening rapture, lasting generally for six hours, when all bodily senses seemed to be suspended and only an active and extraordinary imagination worked. In these rapt states, so quiescent were all ordinary physical forces, so passive and receptive the mind and, withal, so tightly strung the nerves of being, that it was as if the music of the spheres, the very triumph-songs of heaven were audible and the radiance and glow of the heart of Universal Beauty —the light that never *was*, yet *is* eternally, on land and sea—visible, ay, and more than visible, since it flooded her soul and illuminated all depths of consciousness. Whether we name the condition,

trance or abstraction, hysteria or inspiration, a symptom of disease of epileptic type or a state in which apprehension is raised to the power in which the human merges into the divine, the ecstasy which Catherine experienced was not peculiar to her.

In all ages, and of all races, ecstatics have been and are. And whether the voices heard and sights seen by the entranced, are lying tongues and delusive hallucinations or calls of God and visions of inspiration, depends upon the mental attitude and spiritual force and purity of the ecstatic. Men and women are possessed—whether by God or the devil, the proof lies in the outcome—when they are fired by a great idea, impregnated by a poetic thought, stirred by the conception of some far-reaching plan for the deliverance and rehabilitation of their kind. No book of genius is written, no picture of genius painted, no great musical work composed without the sense in writer, painter or composer that pen or brush works independently of the hand that guides and without direction or deliberate movement on the part of the seer of visions and dreamer of dreams who creates the work of literature, art or music that is a manifestation to the world of an antecedent revelation to author, artist or musician.

Ecstasy must precede both conception and creation. All men and all women are ecstatics in some degree. All men and all women seek ecstasy in some form, whether physical or mental, whether of a heart-emotion or an intellectual pleasure; of a bodily exertion or a spiritual sensation; of the drug—alcohol, opium, morphia, nicotine or what-not—that exhilarates, intoxicates, and maddens.

And because of their physical and social conditions, of the inclinations of their temperament and the functions of their sex, women are more accomplished ecstatics—not greater geniuses—than men. Women, therefore, must beware how they use the great gift of divination ; they must have a care lest they prostitute it to the service of false gods ; take shame to themselves if they employ it only for the enhancement of low passions or for the formation of idle habits and contemptible vices. All great mystics, save those in whom mentality is dormant and understanding dwarfed—for among noted prophetesses have been many who were childish and whose innocence did not fall short of imbecility —have recognised the dangers of the trance-condition and the delusions of rhapsody. Much pondering on the matter, as well as much experience of the deceits of the devil, and much enjoyment of the constancies of God, brought St Catherine of Siena to the conclusion expressed in her "Dialogue," under form of an address by the Heavenly Bridegroom to his Mystic Bride. The Lord Christ in the soul of His Saint—"in sentiment," not in fact, as the Saint is careful to note—spake these words :

"If thou askest Me how it is to be known whether a visitation is from Me or from the Devil, I reply to thee that this is the sign. If it is the Devil who has come into thy mind in a form of light, as has been said, to visit it, thou wilt suddenly feel in his coming great joyousness, but as he stays thou wilt gradually lose joyousness, and thy mind will be left in tedium or excitement, darkening thee within. But if the soul is in truth visited by Me, Eternal

Truth, she will, in the first sensation, experience holy fear, and with this fear, joy and security, with a sweet prudence, that in doubting, does not doubt, the soul, deeming herself unworthy, saying, *I am not worthy to receive Thy visitation, and, not being worthy, how can such a thing be?* But she will then turn to the broadness of My charity, knowing and seeing that it is possible for Me to give, and that I do not regard her unworthiness, but rather My worthiness, which makes her worthy to receive Me, through grace, in sentiment; and she will see that I do not despise her desire when she calls to Me, and she will humbly receive Me, saying, *Behold Thine handmaid. Thy will be done in Me.* And she will arise from her prayer and My visitation with joyousness, and will humbly rejoice in mind, deeming herself unworthy, but recognising with love her joyousness as coming from Me.

"This, then, that I have told thee, is the sign by which the soul may know whether her visitation is of Me or of the Devil. If it be of Me, her first sensation will be one of holy fear, her second joyousness, and at the end, she will feel joy and hunger for the Virtues. And if it be of the Devil, the first sensation is joyousness, but the mind is left in confusion and darkness.

"I have thus shown thee a means by which the soul, if she will go humbly and with prudence, cannot be deceived, which she will be if she tries to navigate herself by means of her own imperfect love of consolations, rather than by love of Me, as I have told thee."

And is not this definition of the real and the false vision, vitally and eternally true? Is it not

only Truth and things true, that bring joy and create hunger for the virtues? And do not lies—the enjoyment of false pleasures and following of false aims—leave the mind in tedium or excitement—common conditions of mind to-day—darkening the soul within?

Catherine in her yearning for sanctity and her burning desire to be worthy of the Holy Bridegroom of her choice, learned early to try the spirits whether they were of God or the Evil One. For into the carefully arranged seclusion and wonderfully shielded privacy of her dedicated life strange temptations came. Virtue, however shielded, may not escape the onslaughts of devilish Vice.

So alert for information and education had been the mind of Catherine from very infancy, that she carried into her cell, at seventeen years of age, much knowledge of things good and evil. Although accustomed long and frequently to fix her thoughts upon God and concentrate her mind upon things pure, just and of good report, there had to come times when worldly thoughts tormented and ordinary matters of sense claimed consideration. In the happy chemistry of her cheerful nature and confident determination, all common obstructions of fact and custom, were easily resolved. And while the activities of household and family life kept feet, hands and brain busy, and oppositions to a clear design necessitated taut nerves and an intent mind, vindictive forces of suppressed and outraged nature did not assail her. But in her cell, pledged to obedience, poverty and chastity, conversing with no men except father and brothers, save by express permission of her priest, without

any of the little possessions and fripperies that beguile the fancy of girlhood, and stimulated perhaps to some perplexities of thought and feeling by the insinuations of the confessional —though no discredit is cast on the worthy man who was her confessor, only on the system and the situation in which both were bound—in her cell, I say, Catherine found her thoughts wandering, her imagination resisting control, her very soul rebelling against the unnatural severities of her solitude. Her mind, on the wings of quick blood and sentient flesh, flew to explore territories hitherto unrecognised and ignored. Dreadful visions danced before her when, exhausted by penance, prayer and vigil, she at last lay down to rest. Lascivious yet alluring pictures painted themselves upon the night shadows that overhung her bed of planks. By an intuition one might term supernatural, were it not so very natural, all the soul-destructive attractions of debauchery became personified before her. The gloating raptures of mere animalism asserted their existence. Phantoms in human forms beckoned to her to join their orgies of vice, to take pleasure in her youth ; to set her teeth in forbidden apples while yet they tasted luscious. Shame overwhelmed her. Humiliation was deep. Never again in life could she lose consciousness of the fierce lusts of human nature—her own nature. The distractions of the horrid presences and the disgusts of her own weakness made of existence a curse rather than a blessing.

Thoughts of self-pity assaulted resolution ; doubts of her power of endurance to the end were hideously

insistent. "What good will it do thee to kill thyself by excessive penance?" was a tormenting question to which her reasoning mind was bound to listen; her dedicated spirit bound to make reply. And then came more insidious whispers, taking the sound of sweetest pleadings. They were indeed persuasions of her own inalienable motherhood. A woman with a baby at her breast stood before her. Catherine's pangs were great as she thought of all a home and children meant and of all their relinquishment had yet to mean. But Catherine knew herself. Not for her, were the throes of physical motherhood. Yet it was not the body-pain of child-bearing that she shrank from. Her pangs were sharp enough as, prostrate on the hard, cold floor of her lonely cell, she thrust aside the soft temptation to abandon self-set tasks of solitary contemplation and bow her head to wear a mother's crown; that crown which is not all of jewels nor all of thorns as were those later offered in a vision, to the choice of Catherine. Jewels of joy and thorns of suffering are studded close together in the circlet pressing tightly on a human mother's brow. But Catherine was of a nature which could not compromise. As, afterwards, she chose the wreath of thorns and refused the diadem of earthly happiness and worldly commendation, so now she kept to her resolve to practise in solitude such fasts, penances and meditations as would make her fit to share her Master's work of suffering for the redemption of the world.

There was nothing singular in the experiences of Catherine.

The histories of all devotees abound in relations of their struggles with gross and lustful longings. All young women of ardent temperament, thwarting natural instincts and foregoing natural destiny, must endure some torments of the flesh and pass through a period when things of sense, as they affect themselves or others, obtrude upon imagination and excite in them wonder, yearning or disgust. When other physical and mental conditions are good, when, even as their brothers, girls have the diversions of healthy games and sports; when open-air enjoyments woo their thoughts from dark and misty places of life; when some art, trade, occupation or profession gives them a happy interest in their days; or when independent means, a cultivated modesty and the habit of control make them content with the lighter interests of social intercourse, young women may escape from horrid revelations of themselves and come unscathed to an hour, when they can contemplate without shock, though sadly, the lower nature that is in nature and, measuring the gain of their maiden state against the advantages of a married one, tell themselves that, although the loss of a happy wife's lot is a great one, the missing of misery or of the second-best in marriage, is no privation. But women were not in such case in the Middle Ages and even now, if they practised the directness of speech that was the ordinary talk of the age of Chaucer and Boccaccio, and if the conventual system were commoner among us than it is—it is still common enough—such visions and obsessions of evil thoughts and lascivious feelings as Catherine struggled against in her eighteenth

or nineteenth year, would be counted ordinary apparitions in the thoughts of enforced maidenhood. Given human nature, as it is and ever must be, cell conditions have only to exist, for the phenomena of disturbing visions to be created. And for all the subterfuges and evasions now practised by men and women, whereby they try to cheat themselves and others into the belief that the sexes are independent of one another and man himself (in his double nature of male and female) independent of God, there still remain but two offices for women, two offices that may be in one even as (to use a simile that is St Catherine's own) the sea is in the fish and the fish in the sea.

This double office is the bridal one. As a spouse alone—spouse of a heavenly or of an earthly bridegroom—can woman find herself. If as a human wife and mother she—as the fish in the sea—fulfils her office rightly, she trains her little ones to find the sea in the fish, even the universal will and love that is her own strength and should be theirs. No man or woman can live solitary in this world, but every soul is born naked and alone, dependent only on the Creator who gave it life. So a woman, though she be a wife on earth, must remain ever a spouse of Heaven. Joined to her husband, she must not be merged in him, since she and he both owe a higher allegiance and cannot remain truly wedded unless each has respect for a nobler law than that of the flesh.

Again, if a woman lives her life without enjoying her full heritage as wife and mother, she must yet, for the right fulfilling of her spinster's destiny, become a bride. A woman is not a nun, much

less a man, because she is without a husband. Catherine had never any other thought but that of being a lowly woman. "I, Catherine, servant and slave of the servants of Jesus Christ" is the designation of herself with which she headed almost every letter of hers—and they are many—that is preserved for us. They were all of a later time than this time of her cell dwelling, but it would have been the same if she had dictated letters then. Yet she had humiliations and disappointments in herself to pass through, before her espousals were consummated in perfect faith and charity.

Her first desire and prayer for herself when entering into her cell, had been for fortitude. She had never made the mistake of thinking the life of seclusion would prove an easy one, though she had had no prophetic view of the actual nature of the difficulties to be encountered. But having prayed for fortitude at a time when her spirit was in complacently triumphant mood, she clung to the instruction that had been then the response to her supplication: "Daughter, if thou wilt have the virtue of fortitude, thou must follow Me . . . embrace the Cross; regard for My sake all sweet things as bitter and all bitter things as sweet, and so be certain that you will always be strong." So when the persecutions of the foul fiends were at their height; when at church, as well as in her chamber, the air appeared to her peopled with lewd and horrid spectres and Christ's presence seemed verily withdrawn, Catherine made to her temptations and her weaknesses this answer: "I have chosen pain to be my comfort, and therefore it will not be

difficult but rather pleasant and delightful for me to endure these and all other afflictions for the love of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and as long as it shall please his Majesty."

"Immediately," we are told, "all the company of unclean spirits fled away in confusion, and a marvellous and beautiful light shone from heaven, illuminating her room with its brightness, in the midst of which appeared our Saviour Christ in the same form as He bore when He hung upon the Cross and there shed His most precious blood for the redemption of the world; who called her unto Him and said these words: 'Mine own daughter, Catherine, seest thou not what I have suffered for thy sake? Think it not much, therefore, to suffer for Me.'"

But Catherine's questioning mind was not content. How could such sufferings as she had gone through have been possible for one whose heart was truly given to her Lord? In the words of another tempted one, St Anthony, she cried: "O Lord, where wert Thou when my heart was so vexed with foul and horrible temptations?"

"Daughter," replied the Saviour, "I was in thine heart."

Catherine was the more perplexed.

How was it possible that He—the God of Purity—could dwell in a heart "filled with so many shameful thoughts"?

Then by "infusion of Grace" this reasoning followed: Had those thoughts caused her grief or delight? Grief, in very truth, was the swift reply.

Who then had caused the grief and horror in the

heart in which such vain imaginings and foul conceptions had also sprung? Who but the Lord of Heaven and Glory abiding secretly in the centre of her soul.

Ah, yes, was the conclusion of Catherine, if God had not been present, the foul thoughts had without doubt prevailed. They would have made their entry into my soul with full consent of my will. But the presence of One mightier than they, moved my heart to resist temptation. And then—in God's own time—the light of heaven put to rout the fiends of darkness. By this light Catherine perceived that her pains at the thought of sinning had been her merit and must serve for the increase of her fortitude.

All these things Catherine learned in her vision, and there was yet more to learn. To mediæval Catherine, even as it comes to the most modern of modern girls amongst us, came the thought: Why does a God of Love give suffering to his children? Her Saviour's words were heard: "My daughter, I delight not in the pains of My servants, but in their good will and readiness to suffer patiently . . . because such patience and willingness are shown in pains and adversity, therefore do I suffer them to endure the same."

Christ—so Catherine was taught—was in her heart secretly to fortify her against the enemy, and for the increase of her patience and merit; that is, His Grace was there in her revulsion from evil although she had not felt the Divine goodness as a present comfort. But Catherine knew herself to have been safely carried over a stage of experience that could never again distract or frighten her.

"Now that by My help," it is recorded that she heard Christ say, "thou hast manfully fought out thy battle, know that I am, and will be ever, in thy heart more openly, and that I will visit thee yet oftener and more lovingly than before."

CHAPTER VI

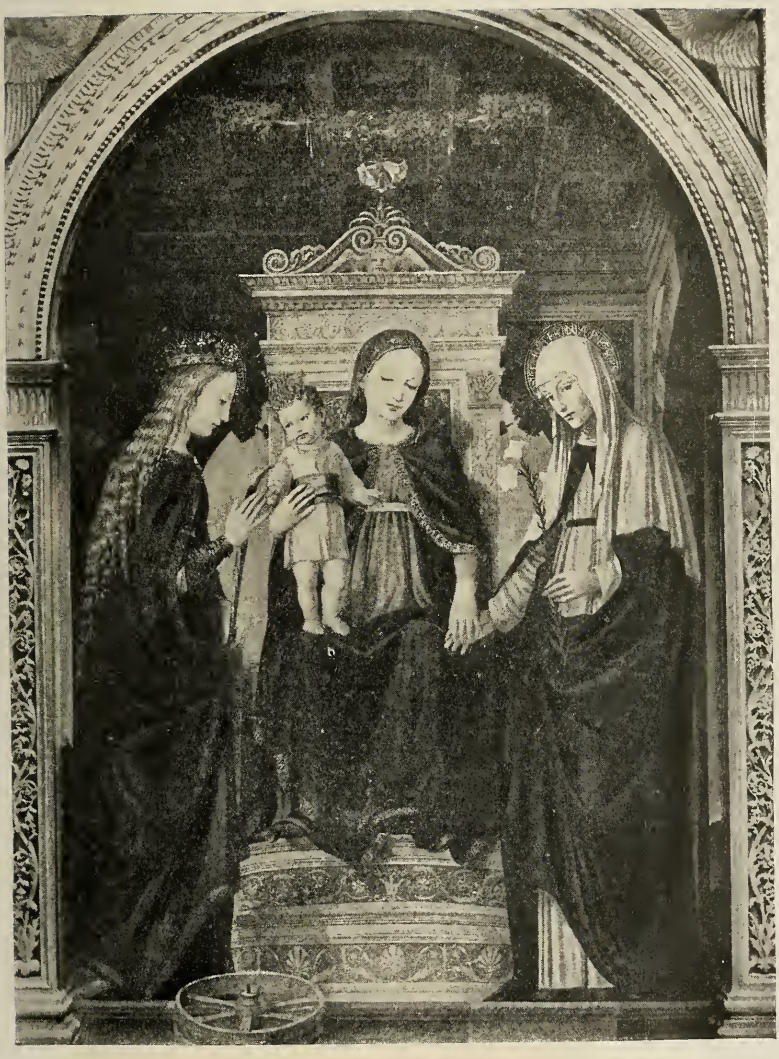
So Catherine was rewarded, as every human creature is rewarded, when, after a great renunciation for the sake of the right and true, the chamber of the soul is not left empty, swept and garnished. In her cell within, as in that without, she had ever kept before her an image of her Saviour. Her endeavour had been constant to resemble Him in fortitude. But in striving after a particular virtue she had lost, in part, her hold on a higher grace. It now became her task to seek with desire and prayer for *perfection of faith.* This seemed to her, then, the ultimate step in Christian climbing. Later still, came the striving after the very bond of peace, and of *all* virtues—*perfection of charity.*

The attaining of a perfect faith is, however, the highest cell task, and Catherine set herself assiduously to accomplish it. Day by day she prayed that nothing might ever again separate her from a full consciousness of her Lord's presence in her heart. Words which she believed were those of the Holy Bridegroom Himself, haunted her night and day:

"I will espouse thee to Me, in faith."

When and how was this promise to be fulfilled?

The story of the espousals is as beautiful as any legend of saint that has made subject for painters from the earliest days of Christianity till now; as beautiful as that tale of marriage with the Infant Christ which is told of an earlier Catherine (of Alexandria), and which was undoubtedly known



THE MARRIAGE OF ST. CATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA WITH THE VIRGIN PRESENTING ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA.

By Borgognone.

In National Gallery.

to the Virgin of Siena. It is full too of that spiritual significance that alone makes legends live. It has also a property special to the tales that are told of Catherine Benincasa. It puts the Saint in a position of dignity. Little that is superfluous or trivial is introduced into the narrative, which undoubtedly Catherine herself related. Only a few of the minor and most obviously manufactured legends concerning her, have the flippant or indecent touches which desecrate too many tales of the so-called holy women and pious men of God, exalted by the Church of Rome to a hierarchy of human beings to be worshipped as "seraphic."

It was the last day of the Carnival. Riot and festivity were in the city. Catherine was in her cell. By prayer and fasting she sought to make reparation for the sins of the thoughtless crowds outside. Voices of street revellers sounded in her ears, as she prayed that *now* might be the accepted time; that God would give her then and there perfection of faith—the faith that could remove mountains of sin, ignorance and folly! At last came the Vision! The Lord Christ appeared and spoke to her these words:

"Because thou hast forsaken all the vanities of the world, and set thy love upon Me, and because thou hast, for My sake, rather chosen to afflict thy body with fasting, than to eat flesh with others, especially at this time, when all others that dwell round about thee, yea and those also that dwell in the same house with thee, are banqueting and making good cheer, therefore I am determined this day to keep a solemn feast with thee and with great joy and pomp to espouse thy soul to Me in faith."

Then before the enraptured mind of Catherine appeared the wedding guests, the Virgin Mary, St John, "the beloved disciple," St Paul, St Dominic and David, King of Israel, playing on a harp. All the company of great and holy ones a religiously instructed maid gazing into heaven, would expect to see. It was Mary, the Mother, herself who came and took Catherine by the hand, leading her to the Divine Son for fulfilment of the wondrous promise. A ring with four precious pearls and a fine large diamond was placed on Catherine's finger and the Bridegroom said:

"Behold I here espouse thee to Me, thy Maker and Saviour in faith, which shall continue in thee from this time forward, evermore unchanged, until the time shall come of a blissful consummation in the joys of heaven. Now then, act courageously; thou art armed with faith and shall triumph over all thine enemies."

The vision disappeared and the ring also. Yet evermore Catherine with her "mind's eye" beheld the sacred emblem upon her finger, though like the stigmata, received later, it was only "spiritually discerned."

Both in the detail and in the plan of this vision we see how sweetly purified Catherine's nature had become. No material thought marred the conception of a union in faith alone. No lulling sense of a delicious repose came to the bride in her bridal ecstasy. She who, when entering on her probation, prayed first of all for fortitude, heard in the voice of the Holy One to whom she gave herself as spouse, only a call to further effort and endurance.

"Now then, act courageously!" These are not

the soothing accents of an earthly bridegroom's comfort to his bride. "Thou art armed with faith and shalt triumph over all thine enemies."

This indeed was consolation, but not of a sensuous kind. The armour given was for use against the foes of sense. At that time she had few other enemies. The oppositions of her family had long ago been routed. It is true that Lapa's emotional objections to her daughter's extremer practices and her fidgety interferences with her daughter's heroic tasks had still to be combated. But the skirmishes were light in which intellectual Catherine and her simple-minded mother then and thenceforward engaged and the victory of them fell always to the daughter. Yet, undoubtedly, the girl's soul thirsted to do battle. Had she the vision already of the character of the war she was to wage, not only against flesh and blood, with these she had already wrestled, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places?

It does not appear that Catherine had in view any definite fight for which her Bridegroom's armour would be required. But the sense was in her that all existence upon earth, whether in cloister, home or the arena of public life, is a strife and an antagonism. A Bride of Christ must be God's constant champion against the World, the Flesh and the Devil, no matter in how mean a form these enemies are manifested. Yet Catherine was very humble. In her mind, if not on her lips, was ever the woman's cry; "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy word."

So we do not read of her forming any plans of

future warfare, of her devising for herself any special mission in life. Only now that she felt strong in the power of her Saviour's might, now that she had the assurance of protection and help, it seemed to her time to surrender some of the dear luxury of her cell meditations and ecstasies and to take a place once more in the family circle. The decision was not made suddenly. She had been so provident as to prepare herself for a wider living and more active service, even before that state of mind was reached in which she felt herself accepted notably and finally, to fight manfully under the banner of Christ, her Bridegroom, unto her life's end. It is possible, though it is far from certain, that, from the first, Catherine intended her time of seclusion only as a time of training for such life-work as she should subsequently be called to. In any case, in the three years of her retirement for penance and prayer, conventual rules and practices were not so rigidly observed as some accounts of her represent. During the later time, at least, and before the turning-point of her vision of espousals, she allowed herself the diversion of twining wreaths and nosegays of sweet flowers. Colour and scent of blossoms were always particularly grateful to her æsthetic sense. While engaged on the pleasant task she sang to herself hymns and spiritual songs and, thus occupied, fell into what has been termed "a holy languor." This languor was certainly holy in the sense that it was wholesome—a beneficial state for one greatly strained by fasts, vigils and punishments. But hardly in that sense did her early biographers apply the term. In their eyes, all unusual states, whether languorous

or rhapsodic, passive or emotional, into which Catherine—seer of visions and dreamer of dreams —fell, were "holy" and, as they insisted, directly God-inspired. But one may have as deep an admiration for Catherine's character as had ever these who accredited her with the awful dignity that belongs to no creature, and yet see in her habits and deeds only the ways and works of a natural, though gifted, woman, and find in her endeavours and accomplishments nothing more miraculous than the ever-widening miracle of human effort and attainment, and the abiding marvel of the powers of the human constitution. For what can be more marvellous than that constitution which the discoveries and examinations of science, in common with the proclamations and assertions of religion, reveal to us as a temple of an indwelling spirit, a congerie of incarnate forces that may be given over to good or to evil ends; yoked to the service of God or sold to the bondage of the devil? But if the "holy languor" of artistic pastimes was evidence of some relaxation of Catherine's conventual severities, her design of learning to read was proof of her growing intellectuality and of her conviction that a woman without learning is ill-equipped for the bridal dignty.

It is recorded that her great desire to follow the office of the Church, first moved her to a study of the alphabet, and one understands the aggravation, to a women of piety and intelligence, to have before her eyes, characters which she knows stand for sentences of solace and inspiration fitfully remembered, and be unable to compare the exact phrases with her memory of them. But it was

difficult for the soaring mind that had already penetrated veils of fact and perceived the essential Word of God—"sweet Primal Truth"—in recognisable form, to toil, step by step, up a little staircase of a department of human knowledge that leads to the threshold of Wisdom's habitation, and wait there patiently with a crowd of faltering students who only one by one, at rare intervals, and so many not at all this side the grave, pass through the portal that divides earth's darkness from Everlasting Light. She experienced a difficulty, common to all non-mathematical and facilely imaginative minds, in mastering the mechanism of the art she sought to acquire. She was one of those who cannot learn on conventional lines; and whose natural manner of approaching knowledge was the unconventional one of arriving at the sum before casting up the figures. These do not learn by repeated addings of two and two together to make four, or by the recital of statements which are, in themselves, only shibboleths. But, after some groping, they gain a view of meanings behind cyphers and perceiving, as it seems to themselves and others, less by gradual apprehension than by sudden irradiation, it is as if a miracle were wrought, when a simple art is mastered. So Catherine learned to read. Disheartened after a little, she almost abandoned her self-set task. The manipulation of figurative detail was an exercise so unwonted as to seem in itself severer and more exhausting than many penances. But, praying that it might be as God willed; that she might enter upon the path to a knowledge acquirable only by a particular form of mental labour, or that she might remain in the simplicity of her woman's wit,

there came to her a divination of the literary mystery. Without having perceived her progress in her studies, she found herself one day at the goal of them. Thus for the last year, at least, of her seclusion, the monotony of her penitential hours was varied by a new interest and pursuit. The ecstasy of her communion with her Lord became tempered and informed by study of the Gospel story from a written page, and by pondering the sentences of the daily office of the Church.

The widening of mental occupation and stimulation of artistic feeling that followed in a deeper reflection on and more frequent recitation of passages of Scripture in which hidden solaces of instruction and inspiration were constantly being brought to light by her agile brain and quick discernment, roused Catherine's enthusiasm to such a pitch that she declared to her confessor that the Lord Himself came down to her—sometimes in the Chapel of San Domenico and sometimes in her cell —and conned with her the Psalms. The Heavenly Bridegroom—so she said in that pictorial way of hers—paced the pavement at her side, repeating verse by verse alternately, as is the custom with religious—monk with monk in the monastery, and nun with nun in the convent—to do with one another.

This declaration, accepted and chronicled as an assertion of actual and miraculous visitation, may be believed indeed as a true statement of experience, provided the experience be ranked as purely spiritual; as part of the subjective life of consciousness which is of a more abiding reality than any objective existence can be. Catherine herself knew

not how to describe to others, even to good priests who were her directors and devout women who visited her, the spiritual experiences that were hers—the things of the spirit she apprehended. Often she would essay to express the emotions and sensations that her meditative flights into regions beyond sense or her ecstatic glimpses of Divine Beauty aroused. Her ardent fancy devised many a parable of the things of God that even in the hot telling of its redundant details, she felt to be a cold and inadequate account of the glories apprehended. She would break off suddenly in the midst of a rapt and picturesque relation of sights seen by the mind's eye, and sounds heard by the mind's ear, saying:

"It were better to be silent than to speak of such things in such a way. It is like dipping pearls in mud to attempt to relate them with a tongue of flesh."

Apologists of Catholicism reproach writers of Protestant and rationalistic views with attributing to saints of old, processes of thought and modes of feeling peculiarily modern, and with substituting men and women as they would have them, for men and women as God made them. The reproach is not undeserved. Nevertheless a comparison of Catherine's own writings—her truest spiritual remains—with the things that were written about her, which embody also the preconceptions and limitations of writers who were on a lower plane of intelligence and perception than that to which she had ascended, serves to convince a thoughtful reader of her letters and her "Dialogue" that many of the miraculous situations, and much of

the miraculous intercourse of which she herself gave vivid account, were situations and intercourse never dreamed of by Catherine in her furthest visions, as actual, and never intended by her to be understood except as poetic and dramatic representations of ideas and feelings; of thoughts and concepts of the intellect and soul which it is the impulse of those conceiving them to nourish and bring forth in bodily form for the adoration of mankind.

An example of the irrepressible instinct in Catherine for the literary depiction and dramatic elaboration of an idea that, in whatever form clothed, has spiritual value, is her vision of the exchange of hearts. Catherine had been praying long that the Lord would take away her will and give her His will, and had been meditating also on the Psalmist's words: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me," when, one day, Christ descended into the chapel, in His own person, and, opening her side, took out her heart and carried it away.

"Two days later"—Mrs Drane is quoted—"being in the Chapel *Delle Volte* in the Dominican church, together with the other sisters to whose use that chapel was assigned, she remained when her companions had gone away and continued her prayers; until at last as she arose and prepared to return home, a great light surrounded her, and in the midst of the light Our Lord again appeared, bearing in His hand a heart of vermilion hue and casting forth bright rays of fire. Then He approached her, and once more opening her side, He placed there His Heart and said, 'Daughter, the other day I took

thy heart; to-day I give thee Mine, which shall henceforward serve thee in its place.'"

Previous to this final transference the Lord had worked another wonder on her soul. He had acted, so Catherine said, "as a tender mother does towards a beloved infant." Even as a human mother extends her arms to her babe "from a little distance so as to excite his desire, and when the child has wept for a few moments she smiles, and catches him, clasping him closely to her heart, and there she satisfies his craving thirst," so the Lord had done with Catherine. He had shown her in the distance the wound in His side and her desire to press her lips to it had excited her to burning tears. At first it seemed as if the Saviour smiled at her grief—how fondly Catherine had marked in life the sweet play of a mother with her babe!—then He had drawn near, taken her soul in his arms, placed her lips upon the sacred wound and there her soul had been satisfied and found heavenly consolation. And Catherine marvelled that her heart was not utterly consumed with love after experiencing such a burning fire of charity.

Mrs Drane yields something to the view I take of Catherine's visions when she admits that the inspiration of the incident of the exchange of hearts came from the Saint's pondering of the words: "Create in me a clean heart, O God." The concomitant text, "I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh," was also possibly in her mind. It is not hard therefore to understand how Catherine saw these visions. With the diffusive ardour of her imagination concentrated upon the thought of the new heart of warm

love and outgoing impulse, to be substituted for that of cold unconcern and contracted action, how quickly the edifice would rise before her of all that dream of her Lord drawing nigh and taking from her side the useless, lifeless organ of self-centred being and replacing it with a very pulse of Divine love for mankind.

The pictures are repugnant to the taste of modern delicates. The wounded side, the gushing blood, the exposed heart, these things in a generation in which they indicate either the commonplaces of the operating theatre or the awful exceptions of accident, war and crime, and among people who—except for a few insane or criminal—are one and all bent on covering up painful sights and turning heads from crude facts of life, these things, I say, seem to us to-day, in anything like vivid representation, repellent and demoralising subjects for artistic reproduction or literary description. But in Catherine's view, as in the view of every Christian not corrupted by the cowardly squeamishness of modern Christless thought, they are the facts that save. The wounded side, the gushing blood, the exposed heart! In the world's eyes, these things are either among the sights of repulsive nature ruthlessly outraged by brutal man or, taken emblematically, they represent the sardonic end of all high hopes, the pitiable failure of the good man in a world of hard, indifferent ones.

But Catherine's devotion to the Blood was no morbid gloating over the sensational death of One who deserved better of His Father's children. Even as the Jewish animal sacrifices of old were not complete unless "the blood which is the life thereof" was poured upon the offering, so Christ's

blood is of value not only as the sign of the completeness of His sacrifice, but as the emblem of the seed of the new life to be lived in Him. Blood is Life, actually and imaginatively, scientifically and sentimentally. And so, for Catherine, the life-stream falling drop by drop on the stone of man's selfishness and the wounded side in which is the dearest treasure of the race, even the sacred heart with its secret of a Father's love, were the objects of highest adoration, being the symbols of the will, the courage and the infinite affection of the God-Man, Man-God, who is humanity's Redeemer.

"For nails were not enough to hold God-and-Man nailed and fastened on the cross had not love held Him there."

Not the blood that flowed, but the love that shed it, is the true object of worship. Catherine, in her deep sense of all that the spilt life-force represented and under the influence of the persistently material suggestions of mediæval Catholic teaching, was in danger sometimes of raising the creature-medium and symbol to heights on which only the Creator-impulse and fact should be enthroned. But in these visions of the wounded side and of the exchanged hearts, although her mind revelled in the joy of literary expression, and all but ran riot in elaboration of pictorial detail, she never lost sight of the elemental meanings of the phrase that was as the live coal from off God's altar, to her lips. It is the subjugation of Satanic self-will, and the interpenetration of human desire and intention by Divine will and design, that the exchanged hearts typify, while the wounded side illustrates the truth of truths concerning Christ's death upon the cross to which

love—not nails—bound Him. For the death of Jesus of Nazareth was no more wonderful, no more shocking, no more penible than the deaths of many others of the numerous host of men and women who have suffered, in some sense, unjustly, and been slain by their fellow-men. It was the infinity of the love displayed that made the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ the most notable and the most pathetic of the world's tragedies. "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

There was no other way on earth; no more signal proof could be given of the virtue and the love of Jesus, than that He was obedient even to a death on the cross.

Catherine knew her own and the world's need of an exchange of hearts and of the tasting of the redemptive power of obedience unto death. So out of Scripture phrases that poetically summarise humanity's great necessities, she constructed scenes of happenings that by the vividness of her rendering of them and the exquisite familiarity of the detail touches, impressed themselves upon her own consciousness, as upon that of those who heard the descriptions from her burning lips, more deeply than any scenes of fact could have done. These visions came to Catherine, as is believed, soon after she emerged from seclusion, but by their nature and their relation to the vision of her espousals, they belong to the cell-period of her life; to the time when, in contemplation and devotion, she learned through knowledge of herself to understand Divine truth and to know her Heavenly Bridegroom in a truly intimate, because wholly reverent and deeply humble, manner.

CHAPTER VII

THUS did Catherine Benincasa come to dwell in the two cells in one—knowledge of herself and knowledge of her God—wherein alone can be lived the truly Christian life. In three years of denial and contemplation, she had learned that life on earth, for the most perfected soul among us, is ever a pilgrimage and a warfare; that the cell of the religious like the Kingdom of Heaven is within, and that that cell to be a true one must be in two parts. "For didst thou rest in knowledge of thyself,' she wrote later to her great friend and fellow-worker, the young widow, Monna Alessa, "confusion of mind would fall on thee; and didst thou abide in the knowledge of God alone, thou wouldst fall into presumption."

Neither of these sins henceforward afflicted Catherine. She saw her way clearly in the light of the Christ-teaching of the value of sacrifice and suffering, and she remained humble, even when conviction of her mission as servant and bride of the "Sweet Primal Truth" made her words sound arrogant.

"Now in this wise you will follow the footsteps of Christ crucified, you will fulfil the will of God and *me*," she wrote to Charles the Fifth of France when, in 1376, she tried to move the princes of Europe to take the Cross against the infidels who held the Holy Land. Truly these words from a dyer's daughter to a great king have the sound of

arrogance; so has the following phrase of her bold letter:—"as I told you that I wished to see you observe the holy commands of God." The "Pardon my presumption," which comes after, is a form of words not necessarily unpresumptuous. Yet Catherine, aflame with desire for a "holy and sweet Crusade," wrote, in her office of Christ's bride, with no sense of self or of her own greatness. She was impassioned only for the observation, alike by king and subject, of what she believed to be the "holy commands of God." Only a truly humble woman could have begun her appeal to the monarch whose heart she desired to move, with the reminder that He who said "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" taught us the doctrine from "the pulpit of the most Holy Cross." "Venerable father," she proceeded, questioning the king, "what doctrine and what way does He give us? His way is this: pains, shames, insults, injuries and abuse; endurance in true patience, hunger and thirst; He was satiate with shame, nailed and held upon the Cross for the honour of the Father and our salvation. With His pains and shame He gave satisfaction for our guilt, and the reproach in which man had fallen through the sin committed. He has made restitution, and has punished our sins on His own Body, and this he has done of love alone and not for debt."

It was indeed her lowly conviction, born in the cell of self-knowledge, that God's care for man was all of love and not at all for debt. If she ever passed finite judgment on the Infinite, because man, being made in God's image, was yet allowed to deface that Image with sin, it was not after the

time of her probation and training in the cell of knowledge of herself. Having once gained view of the abyss of her own heart's selfishness, she never doubted that God owed nothing to man, man everything to God. It became so obvious to her that the Godhead of Free-will was incorporate in humanity that she could but feel that it was only by deliberate choice of evil that men became separated from the All-good. The word of "the sweet, primal Truth" was ever for her an audible word, and the weaknesses and faults of her own spirit—the shortcomings of her desire, her intention and her devotion—ever shocked and humiliated her as such weaknesses and faults shock any soul of woman enamoured of faith, charity and all virtue, and sensible of an overshadowing of the Highest; of an imparted passion for Divine doing.

It has been said[1] that Catherine's austerities were practised "not only to bring her strong young body into subjection, but because she believed that, since we are members one of another, her sufferings could help the souls of others" and that her "otherwise incomprehensible self-accusations of causing misfortunes and failures in the Church are made intelligible by her view that by the godly or ungodly life of one member all the others are either strengthened or weakened."

Catherine certainly believed this, because she believed what every Christian believes and what every man of science—worthy of his name—acknowledges to be a principle of life.

"*The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*" "*Whatsoever*

[1] In "St Catherine of Siena and her Times," by the author of "Mademoiselle Mori."

a man sows, that also shall he reap." These statements are irrefragably true. He who defies the conditions of life, he who fails to respond adequately to his environment, he whose energies are not strong enough to push a way for him in the struggle for existence, *dies.* These are laws, biologists and sociologists recognise as absolute. Yet by a modification, through the discoveries of invention and genius, of the ordinary conditions of life, by legislative or charitable tempering of winds of environment to lambs shorn of their full number of physical and mental attributes, by the supplementing of natural energies with artificial appliances, many sinning souls and weakly bodies live on, rejoicing in a happiness secured to them by no effort of their own. The Christian law of vicarious atonement was definitely subscribed to by science, when Mr Herbert Spencer wrote : "*under conditions such that by the* OCCASIONAL SACRIFICE *of some members of a species, the species as a whole prospers, there arises a sanction for such sacrifices and a* CONSEQUENT QUALIFICATION *of the* LAW *that each individual shall receive the benefits and evils of its nature.*"

And yet there are people—scientists and socialists falsely so-called—who believe that "the doctrine of vicarious atonement has its roots in a bestial superstition pertaining to the worst side of paganism."

The anonymous lady who is the charming and capable historian of Catherine and her times, upon the humanistic side, seems to consider the Saint's belief in the value to her neighbour of her sufferings and endurances, to have been a cut-and-dry theory imposed upon her mind by the sacerdotal dogmas

of her day and, moreover, one by which Catherine, in her cell and before the altar, belaboured herself into the self-accusatory state of mind which, to the superficial student of her life, is so incomprehensible.

But reading Catherine's history as a whole, and studying with it the soul-stories of other holy women—both among Protestants and Catholics, and in various countries and centuries—one feels sure that it was not by any imposed dogma that the Saint of Siena was stirred to reproach herself as a cause of discord and sin upon earth. It was rather because of the intensity of her desire for perfection in herself and others, of the fierceness of her longing to see Christ's kingdom thrive and grow in the hearts of men and of the strength of her conviction of the invincibility of the power of a human individual allied to the World's Redeemer and absolutely yielded to the will of God, that she bemoaned her shortcomings in zeal and effort, and lamented her own feebleness as the occasion of worse feebleness in others. Catherine knew herself to be one to whom much had been given—much of illumination, perception, judgment, self-knowledge and self-control. From herself, therefore, and upon her Bridegroom's business, she required much. So when little or less than she expected was received by those for whom she prayed and worked, especially by that prime object of her devotions and labours —Holy Church—she could but feel that she herself was the defaulter in chief, being one of the few for whose sacrifice for the many, sanction existed in the eternal scheme of things.

Her failure at any time to rise to the special

heights of self-denial and service she had set herself to attain, seemed to her bound to be a cause of sin in many to whom such denials as she practised and such visions as she received, were unknown.

When Catherine assumed the liability of the faults of others, and prayed to God to punish no one but herself for them, she asked for the vicarious blame and the vicarious punishment to be laid on her, not only because of a "view" that her taking of such blame and such punishment would be of benefit to those for whom she stood surety, but, and chiefly, because of the passionateness of her feeling that she deserved God's anger and needed her Master's correction. So natural to her seemed the truth that with God all things are possible, and that she could do all things through Christ who strengthened her, that when things went wrong, for herself or for those who were as Christ's burden for her shoulders, it seemed to her that some slip or shortcoming of her own must have brought the catastrophe or failed to bring the triumph. It is a quick fear in the heart of a human mother, when sorrow, sin or suffering comes to child of her, that she herself must be the cause of it; that by some lack of care, caution or instruction on her part, her darling has inherited his woe. And so it is with any woman in whom the mother-spirit is active—whether it be in a widow whose heart beats forebodingly for the child who is all she has, or in the maid whose bosom throbs with sympathy with God's sick and poor to whom she gives the service of her life.

"Punish me—me who have not taught my child better, who have not cared for him more tenderly,

who have not warned him against these dangers that have overtaken him, but spare him, spare my little one. Give him another chance. Let him go free this time!"

Is not such a prayer as this a common one from the lips of a mother suffering the penalties of a son's or daughter's guilt?

So also prayed the virgin of Siena when, as she tells us, in that "Dialogue" which is one of the truest and most intimate revelations of the secrets of the mother-heart that the world possesses, she went "once upon the morning of a feast of Mary at the hour of Mass" to her accustomed place in the Church of San Domenico. As she prayed, her grief for the offences of humanity and the lively hope with which she waited for God to provide against the great evils of "the loss of souls and the persecutions of Holy Church" gave her such communion that she had a great knowledge of herself and "being ashamed of her own imperfection, appearing to herself to be the cause of all the evil that was happening throughout the world," she conceived such hatred and displeasure against herself and such a feeling of holy justice that she prayed "O Eternal Father, I accuse myself before Thee in order that Thou mayest punish me for my sins in this finite life, and inasmuch as my sins are the cause of the sufferings which my neighbour must endure, I implore Thee in Thy kindness, to punish them in my person."

Not a "view" of a mature intellect, but an emotion in a young heart aflame for the honour of God and the salvation of souls, was Catherine's hope that her punishment might prevail for the

remission of penalties to others. And in communion, prayer and intelligent observation of the facts of life within and around her, she received to her pleading an answer in which is embodied nearly all of what a Christian should believe concerning the value of penalties and the virtue of vicarious atonement. Speaking of her soul in the third person, Catherine wrote: "Then," when her prayer was finished, "the Eternal Truth seized and drew more strongly to Himself her desire, doing as He did in the Old Testament, for when the sacrifice was offered to God, a fire descended and drew to Him the sacrifice that was acceptable to Him; so did the sweet truth to that soul, in sending down the fire of the clemency of the Holy Spirit, seizing the sacrifice of desire that she made of herself, saying: 'Dost thou not know, dear daughter, that all the sufferings which the soul endures, or can endure, in this life, are insufficient to punish one smallest fault, because the offence, being done to Me, who am the Infinite Good, calls for an infinite satisfaction? However, I wish that thou shouldest know, that not all the pains that are given to men in this life are given as punishments, but as corrections, in order to chastise a son when he offends; though it is true that both the guilt and the penalty can be expiated by the desire of the soul, that is, by true contrition, not through the finite pain endured, but through the infinite desire; because God, who is infinite, wishes for infinite love and infinite grief. Infinite grief I wish from My creature in two ways: in one way, through her sorrow for her own sins, which she has committed against Me her Creator; in the other way, through

her sorrow for the sins she sees her neighbours commit against Me. Of such as these, inasmuch as they have infinite desire, that is, are joined to Me by an affection of love, and therefore grieve when they offend Me, or see me offended, their every pain, whether spiritual or corporeal, from wherever it may come, receives infinite merit, and satisfies for a guilt, which deserved an infinite penalty, although their works are finite and done in finite time; but inasmuch as they possess the virtue of desire and sustain their suffering with desire and contrition and infinite displeasure against their guilt, their pain is held worthy.'"

And further: "'I have shown thee, dearest daughter, that the guilt is not punished in this finite time by any pain which is sustained purely as such.'" This phrase should be noted as an article of the faith of Catherine, since she is sometimes represented as one who took all her life a morbid enjoyment in any suffering however avoidable or unnecessary. But it was early in her career, though not perhaps until after some false views of the virtue of pain "as such" had brought upon her chastenings, that she took to her soul the instruction of the following words:—"And I say, that the guilt is punished by the pain which is endured through the desire, love and contrition of the heart; not by virtue of the pain, but by virtue of the desire of the soul, inasmuch as desire and every virtue is of value, and has life in itself, through Christ crucified, My Only-begotten Son, in so far as the soul has drawn her love from Him, and virtuously follows His virtues, that is His Footprints. In this way and in no other, are

virtues of value, and in this way pains satisfy for the fault, by the sweet and intimate love acquired in the knowledge of My goodness, and in the bitterness and contrition of heart acquired by knowledge of oneself and one's own thoughts. And this knowledge generates a hatred and displeasure against sin, and against the soul's own sensuality, through which she deems herself worthy of pains and unworthy of reward."

Surely in this age, which is called an age of introspection, we women are not so far sunk in the sensuality of soul, against which true self-knowledge generates hatred, for the self-accusations of Catherine to be to us incomprehensible except as the outcome of an obsolete "view."

There is a tendency certainly in the woman of to-day, particularly of the class for whom all the hope of humanity lies in "Votes for Women," to be self-confident and self-satisfied. But the spirit of true motherhood—of humility, sacrifice and service—is not dead among us. The virtue of self-accusation for the things left undone that should have been done, and for the things done that ought not to have been done, is no artificial grace imposed upon silly women led captive by ecclesiastical system and antiquated dogma, but an instinct of free and loving motherhood implanted in woman's breast by God Almighty.

And for all her voluntary humilities and "free-will offerings" to Heaven of suffering and service, Catherine never, after her passage from her outward to her inward cell had been truly made, had the Pagan thought that God was a being who required propitiation or who could be charmed with a gift—

whether of a candle, a waxen image, a self-inflicted pain, or a courted suffering. Nevertheless it was told her that her "willing desire to bear every pain and fatigue even unto death for the salvation of souls," was "very pleasing" to her Heavenly Bridegroom since "the more the soul endures, the more she shows that she loves me; loving me, she comes to know more of My truth, and the more she knows the more pain and intolerable grief she feels at the offences committed against Me." And it was further made plain to her that in asking to have the faults of others punished in herself, she was "really asking for love, light, and knowledge of the truth," since, "by the increase of love, grows grief and pain," and charity is ever closely joined in the soul with patience. The soul electing to love God should elect to endure pains in whatever mode or circumstance they may be sent. In other words, special pains may not be chosen, neither should suffering be gratuitously undertaken, but the soul growing in love for God holds itself ready for increase of the pains that come with love and for the sufferings that prove patience. The spouses of God's truth, therefore, must bear themselves ever with "manly courage," always remembering that nothing may be bestowed upon or taken from God, but that every virtue as every defect, is obtained by means of our neighbour.

And now we may see to what "perfection of charity" Catherine had indeed attained before any of her notable works of charity were yet performed, in a still earlier chapter of the "Dialogue" which relates the history of her soul progressively. It is in the sixth chapter of the one hundred and forty-

eight that compose her treatises on "The Providence of God," "Discretion," "Prayer" and "Obedience," that she records these words of the Heavenly Bridegroom's dialogue with her soul, ". . . every virtue is obtained by means of thy neighbour, and likewise every defect. He, therefore, who stands in hatred of me, does an injury to his neighbour and to himself, who is his own chief neighbour, and this injury is both general and particular. It is general because you are obliged to love your neighbour as yourself, and loving him, you ought to help him spiritually with prayer, counselling him with words and assisting him both spiritually and temporally, according to the need in which he may be, at least with your good will if you have nothing else. A man therefore who does not love, does not help him, and thereby does himself an injury; for he cuts himself off from grace, and injures his neighbour, by depriving him of the benefits of the prayers and of the sweet desires that he is bound to offer for him to Me. Thus, every act of help that he performs should proceed from the charity which he has through love of Me. And every evil also, is done by means of his neighbour, for if he do not love Me, he cannot be in charity with his neighbour; and thus, all evils derive from the soul's depreciation of love of Me and her neighbour, whence, inasmuch as such a man does no good, it follows that he must do evil. To whom does he evil? First of all to himself, and then to his neighbour, not against Me, for no evil can touch me, except in so far as I count done to Me that which he does to himself."

In the next chapter this thought is still further enlarged and Catherine describes also the processes

whereby the soul arrives at the discovery of the bounty of God's goodness. Her description is remarkable, not only for its beauty and lucidity, but because of its complete ignoring of supernatural revelation. If Catherine believed, as words of hers imply, that she learned many of those things of God she richly imparted to her fellows, from direct and actual visitation and word-of-mouth instruction of her Saviour, she certainly did not regard as on a lower plane, or of less authority, the instructions that came to her through the rational processes of experience, reflection, observation and consideration. On the contrary it was these processes set in motion by a humble and prayerful attitude of mind, that she most commended to her disciples and which, in the time of her riper experience and judgment, she appeared to look upon as the paramount and essential means of instruction.

"I have told thee," are the words of the Bridegroom, with which the seventh chapter of the treatise of Divine Providence opens, "how all sins are accomplished by means of thy neighbour, through the principles, which I exposed to thee, that is, because men are deprived of the affection of love, which gives light to every virtue. In the same way, self-love, which destroys charity and affection towards the neighbour, is the principle and foundation of every evil. All scandals, hatred, cruelty, and every sort of trouble proceed from this perverse root of self-love, which has poisoned the entire world, and weakened the mystical body of the Holy Church, and the universal body of the believers in the Christian religion, and therefore, I said to thee, that it was in the neighbour, that is to

say, in the love of him, that all virtues were founded, and truly indeed did I say to thee, that charity gives life to all the virtues, because no virtue can be obtained without charity, which is the pure love of Me.

"Wherefore, when the soul knows herself . . . she finds humanity and hatred of her own sensual passion, for she learns the perverse law, which is bound up in her members, and which ever fights against the spirit. And, therefore, arising with hatred of her own sensuality, crushing it under the heel of reason with great earnestness, she discovers in herself the bounty of My goodness, through the many benefits which she has received from me, all of which she considers again in herself. She attributes to me, through humility, the knowledge which she has obtained of herself, knowing, that by My grace, I have drawn her out of darkness and lifted her up into the light of true knowledge. When she has recognised My goodness, she loves it without any medium, and yet at the same time with a medium, that is to say, without the medium of herself or of any advantage accruing to herself, and with the medium of virtue, which she has conceived through love of me, because she sees that in no other way can she become grateful and acceptable to me, but by conceiving hatred of sin and love of virtue, and when she has thus conceived by the affection of love, she immediately is delivered of fruit for her neighbour, because in no other way can she act out the truth she has conceived in herself, but, loving me in truth, in the same truth, she serves her neighbour.

"And it cannot be otherwise, because love of Me

and of her neighbour are one and the same thing, and so far as the soul loves me, she loves her neighbour, because love towards him issues from Me. This is the means which I have given you, that you may exercise and prove your virtue therewith, because inasmuch as you can do Me no profit, you should do it to your neighbour."

BOOK III

THE WOMANHOOD OF SERVICE

"I commend unto you Phebe . . . a servant of the church . . . a succourer of many."—Rom. xvi. 1, 2.

CHAPTER VIII

In many passages of the "Dialogue" not quoted, as well as in those given in the preceding chapter, we have the chronicle in Catherine's own words, of the state of mind and attitude of soul in which she stood at the time of her coming forth from her cell and taking part in the world's work. To accomplish such tasks as lay before this Saint, a woman needs all of the preparation in prayer, in self-examination, and in communion with the highest thoughts revealed to her, that Catherine received; though it may not be that all the disciplines she subjected herself to, before she ventured on active service for the Lord of Hosts, are necessary. A true woman begins all work that purports to be religious work—understanding religious work as Catherine understood it, as the obtaining of virtue by means of one's neighbour, and the fulfilling of the obligation of helping him both spiritually and temporarily, "according to the need in which he may be"—in the same humble and submissive spirit as that in which Catherine began hers. She did not come forth from her retirement with her mind set on any original undertaking; with her ambition fired for any peculiar achievement. Of first intention,

she was neither a reformer nor—in any decided manner—a philanthropist. She had no extravagant scheme for a re-edified Church, for a new Italy, or for an emancipated sex. Neither did she burst into society, brandishing as her sword of faith any particular method of restoring the sick, of instructing youth or of converting sinners. But she appeared in her own place in family and social life, quietly, unpretendingly, equipped with fortitude, faith and charity, a servant waiting upon her Master's word. What she should be led to do, what, in the world without, there waited to be done by her, that she was ready to perform though it cost her her life. And all this, not because she was not conscious of stirring powers within her that might be used upon occasion for the rousing and sustaining of multitudes, and for the denouncing of age-long vice and privilege, but because she desired so sincerely to do only her Master's will, only what became a handmaid of the Lord to do in her place and generation.

In her cell the word had come to her that some day she would stand before princes, would address multitudes and instruct learned men. In her cell also she had learned that the Lord, who all through the world's history chooses the foolish to confound those who are wise in their own conceits, had determined in this, her time, to shame the proud and those who held themselves for learned by showing them "weak and frail women," whom men account as "vile and abject," understanding the mysteries of God, not by human study but by infusion of grace.

These words, coming to her in the time of her

inexperience and when yet she was but theorising about life and its duties, show Catherine to have been not wholly guiltless of a certain spite against the pompous and dictatorial among men who ignore in woman every claim to intellectuality and understanding. She had not then been tried, to the extent that she was later, both in Siena and in Avignon, by the interrogations and criticisms of ecclesiastics of the schools. But it is probable that she had already, when in her cell and going out only to the Church of San Domenico, experienced some rebuffs of zeal and contempts of earnestness from priests whose duty it was rather to foster seriousness. Already she had no doubt drawn upon herself some of those objections of the Dominican friars to her communicating at the Mass, which developed afterwards into forcible ejections from their church. They said that the abstractions and ecstasies which followed with her upon all special devotions, were a "scandal" they could not permit. There were other scandals going on within the sacred edifice, as Catherine was to discover before long, that they had better have disallowed, but these evils were not yet perceived in their full extent by the Virgin-saint. Yet, whether provoked or not by any special manifestations of male haughtiness and male insensitiveness, there was a satirical ring in these early words of Catherine about men accounting women as "vile and abject," which shows that she was not lacking in all elements of the feeling that animates the "shrieking sisterhood" of later times. That she did not allow this feeling to govern her, is a sign of the true humility she attained to. But, though repressed,

there escaped from her, from time to time through life, a note of that unlovely yell against man's presumption, which reveals the weakness rather than the strength of woman, but which also would never ring so harshly or so loudly were it not for certain great weaknesses and wickednesses in man.

In any case, Catherine's forecasts of her own destiny came less from any impulse of sex-retaliation than from her simple faith that the only greatness for man or woman was that of being "servant of all," and from her sincere conviction that by her divination of God's law of love—the height and depth of it—she had penetrated to the very secret of the universe. Wherefore she could not but believe that in God's own time, and in God's own way, she would be called to demonstrate the faith that was in her, and to testify to the truth she knew. She had but lately learned to read, and had not yet attempted the art of writing, but her instinct for literary expression was already strong in her. It manifested first, according to the law of natural growth, in the elementary form of oratory. Proficient even in her cell, in argument and declamation, reasoning with herself and with the thoughts that presented themselves to her, and uttering her convictions and prayers in living voice-tones, she could not but feel, since no talents could be by her wasted or returned profitless to their Giver, that she must use her powers of speech and expression, to counsel and exhort, face to face, the neighbours for whom, behind her veil, she prayed.

For the "marvellous signs above the course of nature," by which she is said to have believed her mission of instructing wise and learned men would

be confirmed, she was, even if she looked forward to them, content to wait. She had no idea of creating a sensation or of gaining the ear of the multitude by any self-display or vulgar proclamation of personal ideas and intentions.

At first, it was only in the home that she played her woman's part, enlivening the conversation at meal-times and assisting willingly in the household tasks that she had once been driven to perform. We read of her rising in the night to do the family washing, and not only supplying the place of a servant who fell sick, but nursing and attending on the invalid.

There is no reason to believe that these tasks were performed as morbid acts of penance or unwholesome shows of a supererogatory goodness. Knowing Catherine, as she was before and after, it would appear that out of her natural zeal and diligence, she did what there was to be done; though it may well be that in her generosity and great tenderness for others, she added always something more than most people would have considered necessary. The inclusion of grandchildren in the Benincasa family, now that Catherine's brothers had brought home wives, even if the unsettled state of political affairs in Siena was not already making times bad, probably rendered it advisable by the time Catherine returned to the home circle, for the unmarried women of the household to do even more of the domestic work than had formerly been undertaken by them.

From ministering to the wants of her neighbour in her own home, it was the natural transition (natural to a spiritual character and a loving disposition) to minister to the needy round about.

Catherine asked for permission to be her father's almoner. He readily acceded to her request and we read that she was not only lavish but also judicious in her doles, although her gifts seem to have come near outweighing the available possessions of the family, if they did not fully balance the necessities of the poor. It was before—long before—days when the word organisation could have been imagined in relation to charity and before social brotherhood, if practised as an art, could have been conceived of as a science. There was indeed little call for systematisation of relief in a community as small, and as elaborately organised politically and commercially, as was the Siena of the fourteenth century. But Catherine had the Christian impulse to give according to the need of the recipient rather than in conformity to a preconceived notion of the donor. She would carry heavy bundles of clothes and provisions selected from the household stores, or from the belongings of members of her family, to the homes of those who had not asked for help and would leave anonymous gifts before the doors of widows and others whom she knew to be in want. And she did not stop at distributing only the superfluities of others. She had of course no possessions of her own, beyond the barest necessities of clothing. But even these she sacrificed when beggars—we must hope deserving ones—assailed her ears with tales of woe and she reflected that she had already but too severely mulcted her parents, brothers and sisters. The story of Catherine intercepted by a poor pleader as she came one morning from the Church of San Domenico, and then and there divesting herself of her

LOOKING FROM ST. CATHERINE'S HOUSE IN SIENA, WITH HIDES HANGING FROM NEIGHBOURING TANNERIES, AS IN HER TIME.

MARKET PLACE, SIENA.

SAN DOMENICO, SIENA.

Photographs kindly lent by Miss L. M. C. Jacob.

petticoat, is one of the worthy ancedotes of this period of her life. It has been turned into a tale of a miraculous appearance of Christ Himself, because when Catherine had despoiled her father's household to the utmost for Christ's poor, she felt that in clothing the naked with her own garment she had indeed clothed Him who said "*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me.*"

A still more touching sacrifice was that of the beloved mantle it had cost her so many struggles to obtain. She gave it to a beggar who had the hardihood to compare the integrity of her coarse coverings with his rags. "Charity is better than a mantle," she said afterwards, when her superiors in the order of the *Mantellate* expressed indignation and amazement at her deed and insisted upon her obtaining the cloak back again. That was always her cheery way. The insignia of her pledged humility were dear to her even then. We hear of this cloak at her life's end patched and mended by her own hands and solemnly bequeathed by her to her first Confessor. Yet even then, had some appraisement of it challenged her, she would undoubtedly have replied: "Charity is better than a mantle."

Charity, to her, was better also than reputation, than rest, than health; even than ecstasies and spiritual consolations.

At the time of her emergence from her cell began her special devotion to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Many are the legends of the miracles attendant on her reception of the mystic Elements. To relate but one, it is told how when the friars refused to administer to her, because of

the commotion and inconvenience of the trances and rigors in which her deep devotions generally culminated, the Bread was seen to fly from the fingers of the celebrant to the mouth of the Saint who, because of that virtue of obedience she diligently practised, knelt far from the altar-rail.

The lowly attitude of waiting for manifestations from on high, that sufficed Catherine, was not an attitude her devotees were content to see her assume. The miracle of her intense appreciation of purely spiritual things was one they could not understand. So when the Saint described, as she would to many for whose better instruction in spiritualities she longed, the vivid pictures her mind saw of the coming to a faithful soul of the King of all Light and Life, and the exquisite rapture of feeling whereby a true "religious" lays herself at the feet of the Master of all Destiny and feels the chords of her being attuning happily with the Infinite, they believed that physical vision and actual contact had taken place. It was a short step then for them to fancy themselves witnesses of some of that transference of bliss which Catherine declared she experienced and which by them could only be imagined as conveyed in a visible medium.

No wonder Catherine bemoaned the grossness and the limitations of a "tongue of flesh."

Yet with a tongue of flesh alone it was her doom, as it is ever the doom of the earth-born, to narrate spiritual experiences. Often too is it with the ear of flesh alone that such narrations are heard. How many, therefore, to whom the experiences come, whether in intervals of soul-quickening or as the more constant revelations of an exalted intelligence

and purified imagination, feel with Catherine that it is better to be silent than to speak of such things in such a way that they will be only carnally apprehended. Quite otherwise is it with sensitives of riotous fancy and grossly material ideas.

These talk volubly and cling to superstition, refusing to possess their souls in patience and caring not to inquire into the truth. How far Catherine, who had her magnifiers, not only among those who were themselves in bondage to superstition, but also among many trained to pander to the love of marvels in the multitude, was herself enchained by the superstitions of her place and day, and how far she was emancipated by virtue of the true spirituality that was in her, it is impossible to determine. We are all of us a little superstitious, and most of us also a little rational and a little perceptive of the Spirit that infuses in matter—the eternity of life that pervades, yet is distinct from, all accidents of existence. Catherine was not without her paltry views of Divine interferences with the everlasting mechanism of the universe, but, for all the misrepresentations of friends and admirers in whom zeal outran judgment and enthusiasm overpowered discretion, she was a woman quietly reasonable if quickly imaginative, whose passion for truth and whose worship of purity led her to handle very delicately and with much self-mistrust all the phenomena that, according to her followers, manifested exuberantly round about her. Whatever her miracles were—how far miraculous and whence proceeding—whether marks of Divine favour, products of an evil agency or indications of a sublimated consciousness or a

diseased nervous system, they were for her consolations rather than sources of strength; independent and special experiences that did not extend to her neighbour but ended as experiences for her, Catherine, and for her alone.

Tormented herself by strange devils—for the legend says that, infuriated by her victory over them in her cell, the spirits of evil returned again and again throughout life, to plague her body and, wheresoever they fell on her, dashed her to the ground or flung her on the fire—Catherine defied their attacks with merry sallies. She feared none who had power only over her body and playfully gave the name of "Malatasca" to the nameless thing that teased and persecuted her. Thus, by a light fiction, she made bearable, and even diverting, obstructive incidents by the way of life that, met gloomily, would have been more than disheartening. But the fictional treatment adopted for her own alleviation, was not one easy to apply to duller and less imaginative souls. Moreover, the aberrations of thought and the pains and weakness of body, for which she made the fictitious "Malatasca" responsible, were too perplexing to her own mind to let her be, in this respect, sufficiently at leisure from herself, to have the impulse to sympathise with and soothe others tortured in the same way. When, however, the exorcising of devils was forced upon her by subterfuge or importunity, she did her best. She reasoned and pleaded and prayed, and did not despise purely physical means of quieting and charming distraught and afflicted creatures put into her care.

But to such sensational achievements as the casting of the devils of vermin out of an unkempt maniac and the hypnotising a furious woman into the belief that she was held to a certain spot when in reality nothing bound her but the suggestion of the Saint, she makes no reference in her own writings. It seems certain that her elusion of personal contact with persons deemed to be possessed of evil spirits was, besides being a natural shrinking from those afflicted with the same "thorn in the flesh" that tortured her, the result of her perception that a generation clamouring for signs would not be truly converted though one rose from the dead. She had the bitter knowledge that many of the miracles attributed to her, and for which she was extolled, had never been performed. Later, when travelling about hither and thither on her Lord's business, and carrying everywhere the reputation of her great sanctity and wonderful virtues, she strove to avoid every appearance of exercising remarkable powers, and would never accept any of the noisy tributes of popular admiration which reports of things she had and had not done, frequently excited. In particular, her reluctance, once at Toulon, to take from its mother's arms a baby whose piteously swollen little body it was thought her touch would cure, is remarkable.

Catherine had a most tender feeling for all infants, and her compassion was always so quickly won that it could not have been that she hesitated to take the little sufferer to her breast for any other reason but that she knew that, if she could do anything for the child, it was only what intelligence and love in its own mother might perform. But

spectators insisted on beholding a miracle wrought. Overcome at last with compassion—so we read, and ask was it compassion for the baby's condition of body or for the crowd's condition of mind?—she let the insistent ones place the little form in her arms, with the result that she had doubtless foreseen and dreaded. The report ran wildly that the child was completely restored. We have not the evidence of the baby's mother, nor even that of any eye-witness. The good Father Raymund, who is the chief historian of Catherine's miracles, records this one, adding most conscientiously that he himself was not present when it occurred, but that it was certified to the bishop of the city, who was so far moved by the wonder of it that he requested an interview with the Saint. It seems strange that, at a time when the Virgin of Siena was at the height of her general fame and making her triumphal return journey from the pontifical court at Avignon, the Bishop of Toulon should not have desired to see her for other reasons than that of the supposed miracle. But thus the tale is written.

It may have been that by the means of Catherine the baby was cured of its complaint, but if so, if by instantaneous contact with the virtue of her person, or by some adroit application of arts learned in hospital, Catherine healed the child, why did she hesitate to do the act of mercy she was so well able to perform? The Saint was certainly of the school —it has not too many members in this time of ours—who hold that bodily ills are small things compared with spiritual defects. To her, a mind puffed up with pride or a heart inflated with sensuality, were objects more distressing than a body swollen by

dropsy. At the time of the plague in Siena, when six of her eleven little nephews and nieces died of the scourge, Catherine buried them with her own hands and without tears, saying exultantly as she laid each tiny form to rest, "These, at least, I have not lost." But, first, she nursed them devotedly, as she tended so many others, old and young, of the plague-stricken in Siena at that time.

Catherine loved children, and was so fascinated with their ways that the temptation idly to amuse herself with them was always strong. "Were it becoming, I should never weary of caressing them" is an avowal, it is a joy to think of as hers. But she never owned to any power of restoring them from sickness in miraculous fashion. Not that she was destitute of gifts of healing, or mistrusted the invigorating force of the faith and love that were in her. She exercised a rare power over invalids, soothing, rousing and cheering them with words, prayers or magnetic touches, as cases demanded. And the true control of the woman in her capacity of "ministering angel" was the ground of many tales, built up with obvious invention, of miracles wrought by her.

To service of her own family and of God's poor, Catherine quickly added a great devotion to the sick. She did not originate any new ways of tending them. Neither is there due to her any institution or reform of hospitals. Nevertheless she became, in her degree, a true "Lady of the Lamp." Light as well as sweetness went with Catherine to the bedsides of the sufferers she tended. She did not nurse them ignorantly, although the most childish empiricism then reigned

in medicine and her knowledge only followed the established practice of her day. Neither did she —although "religious" by profession, and living amid a society which counted exhortations to the dying and ceremonial celebration of the virtues of the dead more praiseworthy performances than the most patient contributions to the bodily requirements of the sick—refrain from the most laborious and the most repulsive physical ministrations, when these were needed.

CHAPTER IX

To show the range of Catherine's activities and powers in ministering to the sick, it is needful to describe only two cases.

The first was that of a woman, Cecca, who lay in one of the poorest of the city hospitals. Being entirely destitute, the care of her soon became a tax upon the hospital resources and, there being added to her original malady a very offensive eruption diagnosed, as were so many skin-diseases in that day, as leprosy, it was decided to send her to the leper-house outside the gates. News of this case reaching Catherine, her pity was deeply stirred. The desperate poverty of the woman and the repugnance her hideous condition called forth even in those claiming to be charitable, brought Catherine to her bedside with the offer to supply all necessities for the stricken creature and to visit her morning and evening, dressing her wounds and doing all that was requisite for her, "with as much care and reverence as if she had been her own mother." The only condition for such service that Catherine made, was the stipulation to the hospital, that Cecca should be retained in her place. The compact was formed and kept. At first, the patient was grateful to her friend in need. But pride and peevishness soon ousted gratitude. The patient—as is a way of some patients in more hospitals than those of old Siena—became exacting and impudent. Not content with reviling her sweet nurse with contemptuous and unseemly

words if things were done in a way she chose not to be pleased with, she reproached Catherine, when the Saint happened to come to her a little later than the ordinary time, with mocking insinuations that the delay had been caused by wanton lingering in the church of the friars. "It seems that my Lady-Queen can never have enough of these Friars!" were her spiteful words. Catherine did not miss the scandalous imputation of them, but kept back hot indignation with a holy recollection of the sickly state of the soul as well as of the diseased condition of the body of her vilifier. "Good mother, have patience, I am a little late, it is true, but all your wants shall be seen to presently," was her constant rejoinder, and then she would light the fire, put on water to boil and prepare the invalid's food, serving it "with such sweet words that Cecca herself could only wonder at her forbearance."

All this account bears on it the stamp of truth, so do the assertions that when Catherine caught what was supposed to be leprosy, and was undoubtedly the same skin-disease that had broken out on Cecca, she was in no way moved, since all bodily inconvenience was a small thing to her in the service of her Lord. The marvellous additions to the unvarnished tale come in its conclusion. Cecca died after many days, that seemed but few to Catherine, "by reason of the great love she had to Our Lord," and Catherine washed her and caused the usual dirge to be sung and prayers to be said, "then carried the body herself to the grave and covered it with earth with her own hands." It was at that moment that the great

thing happened. Even as the Saint buried her sick neighbour, the leprosy which had disfigured her hands disappeared and they remained ever after whiter and fairer than the rest of her person!

It is possible that Catherine's recovery from her complaint coincided with this last office she performed for Cecca. In any case, we may well believe that the aspect of her hands was from the time of the passing of the disease, as the legend states. Their peculiar fairness certainly remained God's own memorial of the good deeds wrought by them. But the miracle that marks Catherine out for veneration was not their whiteness, but the spotlessness of the soul that bore unflinchingly the beldame's imputations regarding the friars, and that feared no spiritual contamination from the outcast whom all others shunned, not so much because of the physical infection of the supposed leprosy of body, but from fear of the deeper contagion of the filthiness of soul from which, it was the general belief of the day, all lepers suffered primarily or they would not have been lepers.

A few years later, when Catherine had weathered more attacks of calumny of the kind delivered by the bedridden Cecca, and had answered for her innocence before a session of the *Mantellate* in her own town and—more formidable still—before a chapter of the Friars Preachers at Florence, she became more inspired than ever with the hope and judgment which make the true Faith Healer. With a sort of gay defiance she had replied in as few words as possible, but those must directly to the point, to the grim interrogatories of the severe ladies in Siena, as well as to the more formal

inquiries of the Pisan authorities. Her free mode of life could not but be a scandal to those who could only conceive of virtue as fenced with rigid avoidances of ordinary duty and intercourse. And there was at least one aspirant to saintly fame, a dispenser of bounties occupying a higher social position than Catherine, who, jealous of the dyer's daughter's celebrity and influence, repeated all too glibly, if she did not deliberately invent, tales calculated to throw doubt on the *bona fides* of Catherine's ecstasies in the friars' church and the integrity of her relations, for charitable and religious purposes, with groups of the more illuminated of the young nobles and churchmen of the city of her birth. This woman—Palmerina—Catherine conquered as she conquered Cecca, by her gentleness, her forgiveness, her service.

And if Catherine's defiance of calumny was gay, so the energy with which she opposed the onrush of the plague when it came to Siena in 1374 might almost be described as hilarious. Despite the horror of the time, and that pathos in her duties to which she was not insensible, she threw herself into the tragic business of the moment with an energy that had as its spring all the gladness of doing her Lord's work. She was here, there and everywhere, serving, tending and supplying the needs of sufferers. We may see to this day the lanthorn she carried when summoned after dark from the Fullonica to go to the bedsides of sick and dying. The little room is still shown in which she slept at the hospital when turns of duty or exceptional pressure of cases kept her there by night as well as by day. It seems to

have been largely Catherine's part at this time to superintend the nursing and to train the novices who—so overflowing was the cruel harvest and so few the labourers spared to garner it—were required to render, with their elders, all active assistance possible. Happy was the young "religious"—whether monk or nun—who was allowed to follow in Catherine's train when she passed on her errands of mercy. The Saint had so much to teach her votaries and the glow of her enthusiasm gave them such a happy heat.

There must have been many more than Messer Matteo, the newly appointed and freshly zealous Rector of the Hospital of the Misericordia, whose collapse under the pressure of these strenuous hours was taken to be a beginning of the malady that was devastating the city, and was afterwards proved to be only a temporary ailment or passing exhaustion. But when Matteo, after sitting late with a plague-stricken inmate of the hospital, was found at midnight, "without colour, strength or spirit," it was quickly surmised that the pest had another victim. A visit to the church having only the effect of making him absolutely helpless and speechless, he was carried by some of the brethren of the hospital to his chamber and laid upon his bed. After a short rest, he recovered sufficiently to ask for Father Raymund, and to make his confession to him. This Father Raymund was a Dominican Friar Preacher of high character and kindly nature who had lately become the confessor of Catherine and who remained always chief and chosen among her confessors, ever her "father" and her "son." It was the habit of Raymund, as it was

of Catherine, to call daily at the hospital during this season of plague, to consult with Matteo upon matters connected with the relief of the sufferers. Going to him, at this time, he felt Matteo's pulse and found him to be in a fever. The rector complained of sharp pains in both groin and head. A physician called to the bedside took a lugubrious view, seeing "evident tokens of a pestilential ague," and of "approaching death." Being of the bland school, the good doctor was very sorry that he and Raymund were "like to lose a very dear friend," and they of the hospital "a very good Rector." When asked if he could not devise some kind of medicine to do the sufferer good, he replied: "We will see to-morrow, but, to tell you truly, I have small hope of doing him any good, the disease is too far gone." This indeed was blandness in the superlative degree. If the words were not as Raymund has recorded them, we do not know what they were, but their ambiguity, even in the mouth of a smooth and doleful man of medicine, seems a little too pronounced to be quite accurate. If hope was small of the rector receiving any good from the ordinary remedies of science, why was a day to be lost before anything was tried? It is not easy to solve the mystery of the medical mind in any century, and the practice of the *trecento* only vaguely foreshadows—does not in many parts at all resemble—that of to-day. And even if we take the doctor's pronouncement, as Raymund did, as the worst possible verdict, we must remember that medical men are not infallible and Messer Matteo's attack may have been rather one of

nerves and natural fatigue than the beginnings of a virulent illness.

However it was, the signal flew that the good rector approached his death agony. Lamentations broke out among colleagues and subordinates in the great work of mercy Matteo directed. Priests, sisters of charity, benevolent dames of the city, all the sorrowful and all the curious that in Latin countries and in times of old, would inevitably gather for such a sensation as the death of the hospital rector of the plague, assembled in his chamber to condole, to bewail and to pray.

But where was Catherine? Some flew to tell her and she, coming quickly at the call—her rare power of divination swiftly exercised—saw at once that the danger of Matteo's attack lay in the fuss his friends were making about it. At such a time, and with such sights of dead and dying all around as had been present for long in her own and Matteo's view, fear and despondency were the greatest enemies to health and life. Perhaps her trained eye detected no look of the dying in the wan face on the pillow that turned at her coming. We do not know what passed in the thoughts of the Saint, but we have vivid picture of her as she entered, bright, alert, bustling. "Master Matthew, rise! Rise up, Master Matthew; rise! This is no time to lie sluggishly in your bed."

The cheery voice roused him, the stout heart braced his nerve. He rose "at the very instant," the whole disease forsaking him. And when he would give thanks to Catherine and make acknowledgment of the wonderful power of God in

her, she "could not abide to hear any words that tended to her own commendation and therefore she went away."

We may imagine Catherine, impatient with the fatuous solemnity of those who gave her praise for a deliverance from a danger that should never have been supposed to menace, yet tender also of the weakling faiths that are so much more precious than the most stalwart fears. On her way forth to errands of mercy more pressing than that to the now recovering Matteo, Father Raymund met her. He had gone forth with the physician, feeding his natural fear at that most melancholy source of panic, expert prognostication of all that may develop in an illness. Seeing Catherine, who had not been present at his departure from the hospital, already leaving it, Raymund felt that the last hope was gone and he wondered at her indifference: she, whose prayers might prevail though every other agency should be powerless!

"O mother," he said, "will you suffer this good man, who is so dear to us and so profitable and necessary to many others, to die after this sort?"

"O father," was her reply, "what manner of talk is this that you use to me? Do you take me to be a god, that you would have me deliver a mortal man from death?"

That was a disclaimer indeed of all power of working miracles. But Father Raymund knew what he believed and was not going to have his late-roused hope denied by any maidenly misgiving.

"I pray you speak these words to those that are strangers to you, and not to me, who know your

secrets. I know well enough that whatever you ask of God heartily He will grant you."

The stout simplicity of the man and his faith in her, made her bow her head. His quick fearfulness in trouble made her smile. Having in mind the sight of the revived Matteo, active in movement and voluble in speech, how could she help that little smile? Then there was a moment's hesitation. Was she pondering the advisability of explaining to good, honest Raymund that there were times when the strongest let their own fears conquer them and when apprehensions of all that may happen are untimely? Did she want to tell her good confessor that her woman's eyes had quickly seen what the pompous expert could not be sure of without scientific tests, that all the rector wanted was a little cheering, a little lively insistence on the fact that he was not at death's door and not a victim of the horrible epidemic?

Perhaps her own "tongue of flesh" choked her; perhaps Raymund's ear of flesh seemed to her impenetrable. However it was, no dissertation followed, although she loved to discourse on God's mercy and the means of heavenly grace. Raymund indeed on future occasions was often caught napping while the Saint expended reasoning, argument and exhortation on him. When she began to speak on religious matters, so Raymund has chronicled, she never wanted to make an end. But her "father" of the willing spirit was also of flesh that is weak. Catherine, aggravated but good humoured, and with some perception of the ridiculous in the situation, would tell him she might as well be talking to a wall as to such a somnolent gentleman

as he proved under eloquence. But at this time, Catherine only hesitated and for a few moments was dumb. Then she looked up lightly at the tremulous, vehement man and her words came as those of a mother caressing her child.

"Father, be of good cheer, he shall not die this time." How human and delightful, withal how capable, true and humble does Catherine appear in this frank account by Father Raymund of the curing of Messer Matteo as he saw it. The real scene shows and the real woman speaks beneath all the supernatural glamour which, for the simple man, at once academic, superstitious and matter-of-fact, obscures the picture and enwraps the life of his venerated Catherine.

The account of Raymund is depicted with verisimilitude in the fresco by Del Pacchia which now adorns the church in the Fullonica. In this product of Renascence art we see wonderful drawing and arrangement. Dress and detail, although pertaining to a little later period, fit the time as nearly as need be, and all the drama of the event depicted, is accurately related. The stark man springs naturally from the bed, around which admiring mourners throng, as the Saint with extended arm and commanding forefinger, bids him rise. In idea and presentation, Catherine is the Catherine of her worshippers' adoration in the early years of her canonisation. She bears on her left arm a sheaf of emblematic lilies, and the garb of her order hangs about her straight and spotless.

But not just so did she appear before the sick and sorry rector. Already her mantle must have been rusty and a little patched. More likely she

came with a basket of sensible provisions for poor sufferers on her arm than bore the lilies that advertised her own purity. Yet flowers were greatly loved by her and she may have taken them to the sick. Only her movement and the way of her, must have been so different from the action and manner of the figure that represents her in this painting which symbolises truly, although it does not accurately portray her. Never did Catherine assume a pose or go before assemblies with assumption of authority. Her attitude was always one of inclining, sympathetic grace, though her quick motions, when tasks waited to be done, revealed a breeziness of nature that swept away sentimentality. Those were busy days. There was no time for preliminaries. Words and manner of her were perhaps just a little abrupt. But she called out cheerily, even coaxingly: "*Rise up, Messer Matteo; rise up!*"

Thus the real Catherine is drawn for us as faithfully by the relation of Raymund as by the brush of Del Pacchia, but both turn the swift instinctive woman into a portentous figure of mystery that, when presented before Catherine as a representation of herself, brought a smile to her lips and, as it would seem, the thought to her heart, "How little these good men see of the reality of things!"

CHAPTER X

NOTHING is more beautiful, or more reassuring of God's indwelling in the human soul, than to see a life, a career and a character developing along lines of natural growth from small beginnings to great issues. The time came for Catherine to add to the numerous smaller executive tasks of daily religious living, larger duties of a more discretional character. Yet no sharp changes occurred in her life. No works were abandoned as too insignificant for a woman of proved ability and growing fame; no enterprises undertaken of an ambition to be conspicuous or of the desire to announce her own views and ideas more loudly and with greater emphasis. Catherine was not hindered in her works of mercy or in her own soul's development, by any peevish notion that the chief obligation of her life was to express herself. She did not feel it to be essential to gratify fully the inclinations of her own temperament. She was still content to play the handmaid's part. But she was handmaid of the Lord of Righteousness, faithful servant of Christ and His Church, and she was anything but subservient to the conventions of society and not at all in awe of townsfolk-guardians of morality and manners who, dressed in a little hour of brief authority, set themselves up, or were set up by their kind, to dictate the coming and going, the wearing apparel and the daily occupations of their fellow-burghers. Yet Catherine's

unconventionality was not of the kind that exists only for the slinging of brickbats at hoary custom. She did not aim at being singular; rather did she struggle in all ordinary things to be ordinary.

This fact is specially evidenced in the matter of her eating. From the earliest days of her religious profession, if not before, Catherine had been—as we should say now—a vegetarian and a teetotaller. That men and women should live on herbs, vegetables and fruit with bread and water, and eschew meat and wine, was in her time regarded as a holy if not a miraculous thing. It is not regarded as an accomplishment so wonderful and virtuous nowadays.

But Catherine had further so reduced her diet of these things and so strained her digestive powers by her vigils and macerations while in her cell, that it had come to be difficult for her to take any nourishment and it is written of her by a co-temporary that as early as her twenty-fourth year the assimilation of food was so painful to her that all she could do at meal-times was to take something into her mouth, "according to what may be on the table, sometimes a morsel of bread as big as a nut, sometimes a leaf of salad, or an almond, or other such things and in like quantities" and of this meagre fare, to swallow nothing, but after she had masticated it to reject it into a little vessel and rinse her mouth with cold water. Even this poor substitute for a meal, so the statement ran, was taken only once a day, and since about the same time as this report was circulated, she began to communicate very frequently, Father Raymund having gained for her the privilege of receiving almost daily, it soon began to be said that

her body, as her soul, subsisted entirely on the Sacrament of the Altar. The inevitable followed. Friends boasted of her wonderful abstemiousness. Enemies declared that her fasts were all a pretence and that she ate very well in private. But belief in her abstinence was more general than suspicion of her secret gluttony. Words that expressed a natural repugnance to food that caused distress, were travestied into proud assertions of her superiority to ordinary methods of nourishment and of her worthiness to be fed only on the Bread of Life. But in this matter, as in many others, Catherine's own plain statements of fact correct her admirers' ornate proclamations of fancy. To "*A Religious Man in Florence who was shocked at her ascetic practices*," as these practices were reported to him, she wrote: "You sent me word to pray God particularly that I might eat. I tell you, my father, and I say it in the sight of God, that in all ways in my power I have always forced myself once or twice a day to take food. And I have prayed constantly, and do pray God and shall pray Him, that in this matter of eating He will give me grace to live like other creatures, if it is His will—for it is mine." But never, in this respect, was Catherine "to live like other creatures." Her digestion was too decidedly impaired; although, even before she wrote to the religious man her abstinences had so astounded, she had, after a prolonged fast occasioned by extreme digestive pains, eaten with some relish a salad of beans in oil and, two or three times in one day, taken a little food and wine. But that was a day of special feast. As a constant diet, she took only morsels of bread, a few herbs—*i.e.*

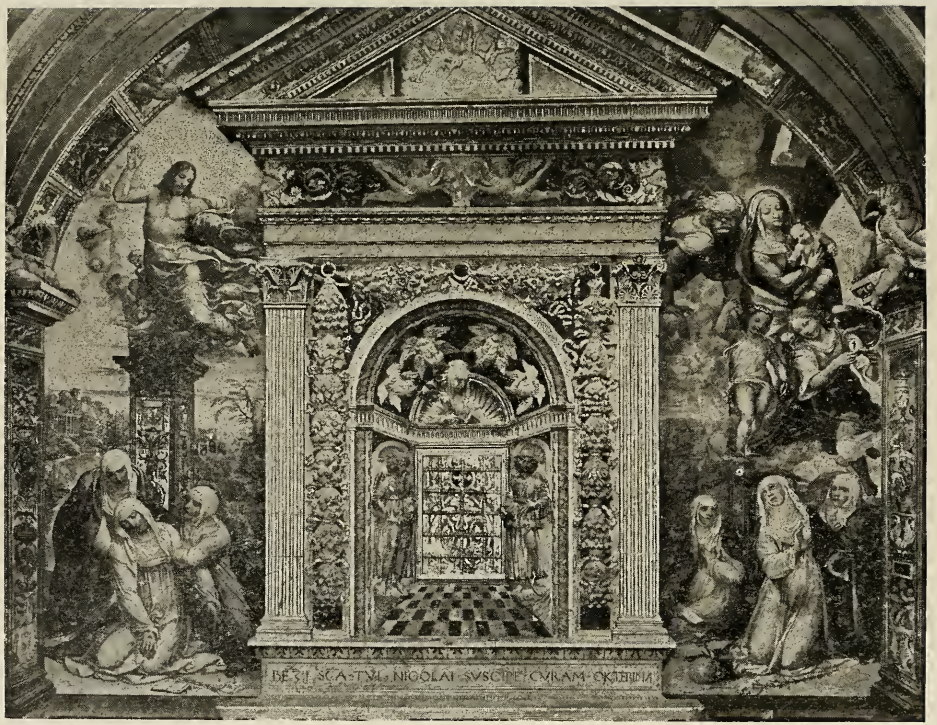
vegetables—and draughts of water. A regimen more sufficing, as later science has proved, than any co-temporaries of Catherine could believe.

But it is of little concern to us now, to know Catherine's idiosyncrasies and capacities in the matter of eating, except as they evidence the sharpness of the sufferings and disabilities against which she had always to contend and over which, for the span of her days, she so signally triumphed. It is however important to know how she strove to be like other people and took no credit to herself for her many peculiarities of health and habit. Catherine always endeavoured to be sane. And this, in view of her temperament and the environment of her times, was no easy matter. When moral questions confronted her, however, all conventions were ignored. She could not slur over sin, as was and is the custom of so many "other people," both religious and lay.

It was before the plague, which fell upon Siena when Catherine was in her twenty-seventh year, that she learned of abominable practices in vogue among many sections of society, but particularly and most lamentably, among the religious of the time. The first knowledge of crimes from which, as Catherine conceived, even the devils shrink, depressed her so deeply that she "seemed to see no refuge but death in which she could hide from the leprosy." Is not this ever the effect such revelations have on the pure and ardent mind of womanhood? To Catherine it was awful and frightening to discover that "neither small nor great, nor old nor young, nor clerics, nor religious, nor prelates, nor lords, nor subjects, were uncontaminated in

body or mind by this curse." Yet the plague, with its call for recruits in the Army of the Lord's Dauntless and with the opportunities it gave for the proving of the Christian spirit, had for Catherine the message that the Lord "retained His just wrath" in order to correct the lives of the evildoers by placing in their midst "His servants who were healthy to pray to Him for the leprous."

That, as well as praying for the "leprous," she rebuked them, we may not doubt, though her young tongue could not have spoken such caustic denunciations as were dictated later by her mature mind. She was never one, however, to pour oil on sores that should be cauterised or cut out with a knife. So we may believe that she was quickly in arms to protect others—men and women, young and old—from the outrages of a corrupt priesthood and the snares of a contemplative life. Not alone for the fault of an epileptic seizure or hypnotic trance coming upon her at times inconvenient for the officials of San Domenico, is it believable that she was, as is related, constantly thrown out of the church on to a rubbish-heap, there to be kicked, as she lay in the rigor of her ecstasy, by passers-by and persons assisting at her eviction, both men and women. Offences of a tongue voluble in denunciations of evil life, more than of a body overcome by prayerful concentration, must have shocked the friars and the "man in the street." Catherine was hated of those who made God's house a den of thieves, because she exposed the thefts of virtue and honour daily going on under the cloak of religious profession and the name of religious duty. To her niece—Eugenia, daughter of her brother



THE SWOONING AND COMMUNION OF ST. CATHERINE, BY SODOMA.

With bust of the Saint above the altar.

An Altar-piece in San Domenico.

—in a convent at Montepulciano, Catherine was constrained to write:

"And wouldst thou not be foolish indeed to depart from Him who gives thee perfect purity . . . for those who many a time and oft shed a stench of impurity, defiling mind and body? God avert them from thee by His infinite mercy!

"And in order that no such thing may ever happen to thee, be on thy guard; let not thy misfortune be such as to enter into any private conversation with monk or layman. For if I were to know or hear it, even if I were much further away than I am, I would give thee such a discipline that it would stay in thy memory thy whole life." And further: "Go to confession and tell thy need and when thou hast received thy penance, run. Beware, moreover, that thy confessors be not from men who have brought thee up. And do not wonder because I talk so; for many a time thou mayest have heard me say, and it is the truth, that the talk of so-called *pious men and women* (*devotees*) full of depraved expressions ruins the soul and the habits and practices of Religious."

And in her "Dialogue," which contains in crystal sentences, ideas which in their fluid state must have spilled over times and again on to touchy dignitaries if they did not always cleanse defiled consciences, she gives further and more outspoken revelations of hideous guilt in the "so-called pious."

Listen to the Holy Bridegroom Himself speaking in that conference of her soul with Deity which she so marvellously imagined!

"Alas! sweet daughter," are His words, "where

is the obedience of religious who have been placed in holy religion like angels, and are become worse than devils? I have placed them there to announce My word in doctrine and in truth, and they cry out with the sound of words alone, and so produce no fruit in the hearts of their hearers. Their preaching is made rather for the pleasure of men, and to tickle their ears, than to My honour. Wherefore they do not make it their study to preach goodness of life, but rather to discourse with polished wit. Such as these do not truly sow My seed, because they take no pains to root out vices and plant virtues. For not having uprooted the thorns out of their own garden, they take no pains to do so out of their neighbour's. All their delight is in adorning their bodies and their cells, and in hurrying to and fro about the city. And the same thing happens to them as to a fish which dies when taken out of water. So die those religious who leave their cell, of which they should make a heaven, and wander with their useless, dishonourable life through the wards of the city, seeking out the houses of their relations, and of other seculars, according to the pleasure of their wretched subjects and wicked superiors who hold them in so loose a leash. And since these miserable pastors do not mind seeing their religious subject in the hands of she-devils, they often themselves give them up to them. And sometimes when they know that they are incarnate devils they will send them to the monasteries to those who are incarnate she-devils, and thus one ruins the other with many subtle devices and frauds. And the principle of their life, the Devil conceals under the cover of devotion, but the fruits of their

devotions appear very soon. First are seen stinking flowers of dishonourable thoughts, and the leaves of corrupt words, and then they fulfil their miserable desires, and thou knowest well what fruits follow, namely children. And often they carry it so far that both one and the other leave their religion and become public rogues and harlots.

"All these and many other evils are caused by worthless superiors, who have not kept their eye on their subjects, but have rather let them go loose, and themselves pushed them into sin and have made as if they did not see their miseries, or that their subject was wearied with his cell; and so through their double fault the subject dies. Thy tongue could not narrate with what terrible sins and in what miserable ways they offend Me. They have become the arms of the Devil, and with their stench they poison everything within, that is, in their monastery, and without among seculars. They are deprived of fraternal charity and each one wishes to be greater. Each one desires to possess something, acting contrary to obedience and the vow which they have taken. They have promised to observe the rule of their order, and they break it, and not only do they not observe the rule themselves but they fall like hungry wolves upon the lambs who wish to observe it, mocking them and jeering at them. These wretches think to cover their own sins with the persecutions, mockery and insult that they deal out to good religious who observe the rule, but in so doing they expose themselves much more."

"To such a state have come the gardens of holy religious orders; for holy they are in them-

selves, having been founded by the Holy Spirit, and indeed the order in itself cannot be spoilt or corrupted through the sins of subject or superior."

And all this comes about because "they do not fulfil their first vow of obedience to observe their rule."

So lived religious—"clothed like sheep, but in reality rapacious wolves"—and the "clerics and ministers of the Holy Church" were full of sins rising out of the three columns of Impurity, Pride and Cupidity, of which the foundation is self-love. The revelations of the avarice and pride of the clerics were as startling as those of their impurity. God's houses of prayer had very literally and actually been turned into dens of thieves through the avaricious bargainings of ecclesiastics. And not only dens of thieves, but, as Catherine forcibly says, "cattle sheds" and "stables" where priests of the altar lay in the filth of impurity, keeping their "she-devils" in the church as a bridegroom his spouse in his own house.

Yet Catherine preached no crusade against evil-living priests, but, while she called upon the Holy Father to reform them, enjoined the people to love them "by reason of the virtue and dignity of the Sacrament." "By reason of that very virtue and dignity," so the Bridegroom told His bride, "you should hate the defects of those who live miserably in sin, but not on that account appoint yourselves their judges, which I forbid, because they are My Christs, and you ought to love and reverence the authority which I have given them. You know well that if a filthy and badly dressed person brought you a great treasure

from which you obtained life, you would not hate the bearer, however ragged and filthy he might be, through love of the treasure and of the lord who sent it to you. His state would indeed displease you and you would be anxious through love of his master that he should be cleansed from his foulness and properly clothed."

. . . . . .

"Whence comes the stench that so infects their souls? From their own sensuality, which sensuality and self-love have they enthroned as the mistress of their soul, who has become sensuality's handmaid, whereas I had made her free with the Blood of My Son. I speak of the general manumission when the whole human race was freed from the servitude and lordship of the Devil. Every rational creature received this grace, but over and above it, I set free My anointed ones from the servitude of the world, and appointed them to serve Me, the eternal God, alone, and to administer the Sacraments of the holy Church, and so free have I made them, that I do not wish any temporal lord to be their judge."

One wonders if Catherine saw how bound she was to the triumph-car of the papacy and how inconsistent with much of her own teaching were these other words of hers! Yet no reverence for their office blinded her to the iniquities of individual priests who forsook the Table of the Cross. The Divine Voice said these had relinquished "feeding on the food of souls for My honour, and had chosen for their table the public tavern, and there, openly cursing and perjuring themselves, full of many miserable sins, like men blinded and without the

light of reason, have become animals through their sins, and live lasciviously in word and deed. They do not know if there be any Divine office, and if sometimes they say it, they do so with their tongue only, their heart being far from Me. They are also rogues and cheats, and having played for their soul and lost it to the Devil, they stake the goods of the Church, and the temporal substance which they receive by virtue of the Blood, cheating and gambling it away. Wherefore the poor do not receive their due, and the Church remains unfurnished and deprived of the necessary ornaments ; for these men, having become temples of the Devil, take no further care of My Temple. But those ornaments which they ought to place in the church out of reverence of the Blood, they place in their own houses ; and what is worse, they do this as bridegrooms adorning their spouses, for these incarnate demons adorn with Church property their she-devils, with whom they live shamelessly in iniquity and impurity, sending them about or keeping them with them, at their own pleasure ; so much so that these wretched demons, even when they are celebrating at the altar, are not the least disturbed if their wretched she-devil should come up with the rest of the people to make her offering, leading their children by the hand. Oh ! demons and more than demons ! if only your iniquities were more concealed from the eyes of your subjects, doing them in secret, you would indeed offend Me and hurt yourselves, but at least you would not do the harm you now do to your neighbour, laying bare your criminal life before his eyes, so that your example gives him no reason to

leave his own sins, but rather causes him to fall into similar and greater ones than you fall into yourselves. Is this the purity that I require from My minister when he comes to celebrate at My altar?"

God demands of His priests and of all communicants a perfect purity, but these "Christs" act in a contrary way, "for they come full of impurity to this mystery, and not only of that impurity to which, through the fragility of your weak nature, you are all naturally inclined (although reason when free-will permits can quiet the rebellion of nature) but these wretches not only do not bridle this fragility, but do worse, committing that accursed sin against nature."

What a picture of the Church of her times—vivid, direct, unstrained—and what a revelation of the vices of humanity in any and every age! Catherine had few illusions concerning the characters of the men and women associated with her, although she often expected more of the good ones than proved to be in their power of will to render. They could not be all like herself, knowing no limits to human energy and capacity. But although some she trusted and hoped great things of, disappointed her, turning out to be only normal men and women when she took them for saints and heroes—Father Raymund was one of these—she was never entirely deceived about the characters of men and women round her. So deeply did she penetrate into heart-secrets, and so trustworthy was her observation, that it came to be with her that she saw the souls of those approaching her before she perceived their bodies. And all this came about, as she herself

owned, through her experiences in life. Having once, through a special interest and deep concern for a fellow-being, peered into the very depths of a human character, she was able ever afterwards to sense the fine aroma of virtue or the foul stench of vice with unerring discrimination.

Yet although priests sinned, the Ark of the Lord remained sacred for Catherine and she never visited on the worthy of her Lord's ministers the sins of the unworthy. With these unworthy she was, however—and one does not wonder at it—most unpopular. Neither can one wonder that worthy, cautious, conservative men like Father Raymund, took time, as he had done, to discover that this unmarried woman, who was not a recluse, although she had been one, who went about freely in the world, speaking even more freely, and who claimed to have had instruction in righteousness *by direct infusion of grace*, was not only another of the many ecstatics—hysterical, ignorant, petulant and of enormous vanity—who at all times in the world's history, spring up in the garb of some religious profession and prophesy strange subversive things, but whose prophecies and professions soon dry up and wither, having no root in them of a truly virtuous mind.

The stories of the visits to her in Siena, in Pisa, and in Avignon, of learned divines and pompous pedants among ecclesiastics, who came with the avowed object of putting her to confusion as saint, teacher and theologian, illustrate the modification of Catherine's method of prophecy under the action of her experiences of life and the lessons she learned from them. On the first occasion, when as yet

Catherine had little more than a local reputation and had found no cause to restrain her naturally direct speech, she met the "intentionally perplexing" questions of the "masters," and their jumbled sophistries, with the retort of a fine scorn. "Oh! confounded, confounded be this inflated science of yours" (Benincasa's daughter seems to have been departing a little under the torments of life from the yea, yea and nay, nay of her father) "which does yourselves so much harm and to others so little good while you use it as you do! . . . How can *you* understand these things? *You* who only seek after the husks of truth that you may please creatures and win praise from them? and on this only have you set your hearts; but, my fathers, do so no more for the love of Jesus crucified." And we read that these "masters" were immediately converted from their luxurious and selfish lives.

At Pisa, where she began to learn the necessity of some diplomacy if worldly enemies were to be transformed into friends, she met the bland hypocrisy of her interrogators with a little covert pretence of her own.

"We have heard, Sister Catherine," said the famous physician and learned lawyer who were her inquisitors there, "a great deal of your virtue and your knowledge of Holy Scripture and have come to gather some instruction from your lips. How do you then explain the passage where we are told God *spoke* when He created the world? How could He speak? Has he a mouth or tongue?" Catherine "listened in modest silence" and then replied: "I wonder that you who teach others should say that you come to seek instruction from a poor little

woman like me, whose ignorance you should rather enlighten. However, as you desire me to speak, I will say what God may inspire. It would be of very little purpose to me to know how God, who is a Spirit and not a body, spoke in creating the world. What *does* matter both to me and to you is to know that Jesus, the Eternal Word of God, took flesh and suffered to redeem us. It is necessary for me to believe in Him and to meditate on Him, that my heart may be full of His love, who died for the love of me." These words won both lawyer and physician to be her "zealous champions."

And the prelates at Avignon who tried to convict her of false pretences as an ambassadress and of holding heretical doctrines, were rebuked with even greater gentleness, though with equal firmness, and had to report to the Pope that they had never met a humbler or more illumined soul.

But Catherine had other ways of meeting doubts and despondencies genuinely felt. She could console with fervour and make herself one in passionate sympathy with the victim of a true despair. The intensity of her prayers for criminals going to execution and the importunity and devotion with which she sought out and enticed to her own house, women who were sinners, have often been memorialised. So also in picture and in poetry, as well as in her "lives," has been signally recorded the very ecstasy of affection in which she illumined and consoled "a young gentleman of Perugia," Niccolo Tuldo by name, who had been condemned to death "for some rash words he had uttered against the State." Headstrong and self-sufficient in his prison, as he had been in the

world, the youth raged with despair and refused to make his confession or to be spoken to about his soul. He was not of the criminal type and had intended no crime, not even a political one. The injustice of his situation maddened him and made him only the more proudly defiant. Who could bring such a one to a confession of the justice of his condemnation, to a glorious exaltation whereby his execution should become "as the passing away of some holy martyr"? Who but Catherine? And how her woman's heart was wrung, her pity stirred, her fervour roused as she pleaded with and exhorted the boy! How she identified herself with all his sufferings and perplexities and then worked for him, and for herself, a way out of despondency and rage into a very rapture of delight in being counted worthy to suffer for the Master and as the Master, worthy to share in the love of the Crucified and to become obedient to the Father for the good of the human race! It has been truly said[1] that, in compassing the obedience unto death of Niccolo Tuldo, Catherine "lifted one of those seemingly purposeless and cruel accidents of destiny which stagger faith, into unity with the organic work of the world's redemption." This could scarcely have been done except by lavish outpouring of a love and a sympathy that counted not their own; considered not at all the strain upon nerve, body and strength; cared nothing for the heart-bruises that might be suffered, or the mental disorder that might supervene. For Catherine in this struggle with the Adversary, for a soul all too satanic in its attitude against religion and society, undoubtedly

[1] Vida D. Scudder, "Letters of Saint Catherine of Siena."

sacrificed something of heart-integrity and mind-balance. She was all mother in her yearning over the boy's soul. Yet there could not but creep into the rhapsodical intimacy which, for the hurrying days that stood between Tuldo's condemnation and execution, existed between the Saint (a woman ardent, affectionate, devoted) and the disciple (a man infuriated, pacified, adoring) some emotion that was of sense although in no degree gross or disordinate. It was Catherine's own belief that "too readily may a spiritual love for a creature become entirely sensual, if the eye is not kept fixed on the blood of Christ crucified." And never perhaps in any of the other close friendships of her life did she so resolutely cleanse the thoughts of her heart, that went out towards Tuldo and returned again, in the precious blood which was ever for her the very fount of all being and all good.

Read the words in which she related to Father Raymund, not perhaps without intention of firing that comfortably righteous one—dear, kind and true, but not in the least heroic—with enthusiasm for a martyr-life, all the history of her rescue of the soul of Tuldo.

"I went to visit him of whom you know, whereby he received such great comfort and consolation that he confessed and disposed himself right well; and he made me promise by the love of God that, when the time of execution came, I would be with him; and so I promised and did. Then in the morning, before the bell tolled, I went to him, and he received great consolation; I brought him to hear Mass, and he received the Holy Communion, which he had never received since the first. That will of his was

harmonised with and subjected to the will of God, and there only remained a fear of not being strong at the last moment; but the measureless and inflamed goodness of God forestalled him, endowing him with so much affection and love in the desire of God that he could not stay without Him, and he said to me: 'Stay with me and do not abandon me, so shall I fare not otherwise than well, and I shall die content'; and he leaned his head upon my breast. Then I exulted, and seemed to smell his blood, and mine too, which I desire to shed for the sweet Spouse Jesus, and as the desire increased in my soul and I felt his fear, I said: 'Take heart, sweet brother mine, for soon shall we come to the nuptials; thou wilt fare thither bathed in the sweet blood of the Son of God, with the sweet name of Jesus, which I wish may never leave thy memory, and I shall be waiting for thee at the place of execution.' Now think, father and son, how his heart lost all fear and his face was transformed from sadness to joy, and he rejoiced, exulted and said: 'Whence comes such grace to me that the sweetness of my soul should await me at the holy place of execution?' See, he had reached such light that he called the place of execution *holy*, and he said: 'I shall go all joyous and strong, and it will seem to me a thousand years till I come thither, when I think that you are awaiting me there; and he spake so sweetly of God's goodness, that one might scarce sustain it. I awaited him then at the place of execution; and I stayed there, awaiting, with continual prayer, in the presence of Mary and of Catherine, Virgin and Martyr. . . .

"Then he came, like a meek lamb, and, seeing me,

he began to laugh, and he would have me make the sign of the Cross over him; and when he had received the sign, I said: 'Down! to the nuptials, sweet brother mine, for soon shalt thou be in eternal life.' He placed himself down with great meekness, and I stretched out his neck, and bent down over him, and reminded him of the blood of the Lamb. His mouth said naught save *Jesus* and *Catherine*; and, as he spoke thus, I received his head into my hands, closing my eyes in the Divine Goodness, and saying: *I will.*"

Thus far, I have followed the translation of this famous letter by Professor Edmund Gardner. To continue the story, as Catherine herself set it down, the rendering of Miss Vida D. Scudder, must be copied. "Then was seen God-and-Man, as might the clearness of the sun be seen. And he stood wounded, and received the blood; in that blood a fire of holy desire, given and hidden in the soul of Grace. He received it in the fire of His divine charity. When He had received his blood and his desire, He also received his soul, which He put into the open treasure-house of His Side, full of mercy; the primal Truth showing that by grace and mercy alone He received it, and not for any other work. . . . Thus received by God through power—powerful is He to do! the Son also, Wisdom the Word Incarnate, gave him and made him share the crucified love with which He received painful and shameful death through the obedience which he showed to the Father for the good of the human race. And the hands of the Holy Spirit locked him within.

"But he made a gesture sweet enough to draw

a thousand hearts. And I do not wonder, for already he tasted the divine sweetness. He turned as does the Bride when she has reached the threshold of her bridegroom, who turns back her head and her look, bowing to those who have accompanied her, and with the gesture, she gives signs of thanks.

"When he was at rest, my soul rested in peace and quiet, in so great a fragrance of blood that I could not bear to remove the blood which had fallen on me from him.

"Ah me, miserable! I will say no more. I stayed on the earth with very great envy. And it seems to me that the first new stone is already in place. Therefore do not wonder if I impose upon you nothing save to see yourselves drowned in the blood and flame poured from the side of the Son of God. Now then, no more negligence, sweetest my sons, since the blood is beginning to flow, and to receive the life. Sweet Jesus, Jesus Love."

CHAPTER XI

"When first I began to visit her, she was young. . . . I was also young yet, far from experiencing the embarrassment which I might have felt in the company of other women of her age, the longer I conversed with her, the more utterly were all earthly passions extinguished in my breast."

These are the words of a Franciscan friar, Bartolommeo, one of a band of young Friar Preachers, of whom the most were Dominicans, who came into association with Catherine in her young days of service—after her emergence from her retreat, but while she yet lived in her father's house and retired to her cell at times when family or charitable duties did not claim her and particularly when receiving visits from her friends and from the many callers who, sympathetic, inimic, or idly curious as the case might be, wanted either to admire or to challenge the goodness and wisdom of the reputed saint. Bartolommeo added that he had known many others—both laymen and religious—who felt as he did that her aspect and address poured forth a very fragrance of purity, more angelical than human.

Moreover—and this was the savour of her sanctity —"she was always joyful and merry of countenance." There was never any insipidity or dullness in Catherine's goodness and all friendship with her was purified and made inspirational by her habit and way of gladness. Beneath all the weights

of her austerities and denials, the spirit named *Euphrosyne* careered gaily. A Grace of merriment or a tomboy Saint, Catherine's smiling countenance, brave speech and hoyden playfulness made all her relationships essentially and incontrovertibly pure. A tale of a man—a friar—who had a "profane" affection for her and who, when he found her unassailable, forsook his order and committed suicide, is part of her legend. But the profanity was all in the man's breast, so his guilty aspirations have no true part in her history. She dwelt on a plane above all wallowings. But if into her life there came a moment when pity was akin to love—true, human love as between man and maid—it was the moment when Niccolo Tuldo, under sentence of death, laid his head upon her breast and when the fragance of his blood came to her with the fragrance of her own. It was with a fondness very womanly as well as with a rapture very saintly, she recalled his naming her "the sweetness of his soul" and his telling her it would seem a thousand years till he came to the scaffold when he thought of her waiting for him there.

Catherine had prayed with other prisoners and assisted at the conversions of other condemned criminals, but with none was her compassion moved as with this one. Only of Tuldo could she have written, "When he was at rest, my soul rested in peace and quiet, in so great fragrance of blood that I could not bear to remove the blood which had fallen on me from him."

Yet there were other youths for whom Catherine had an affection that was tender and indulgent; for whom she was the sweetest and truest of spiritual

mothers and natural friends. Her relations with the large "family" of distinctive men and women she gathered round her during her progress through life, are difficult to understand in our more self-seeking days. To be the centre of such a group of pious, cultured and active-minded people as gathered round Catherine—not in any community of material advantage or in any defined order of religious living—but in a spontaneously evolved association of which she was at once the welding force and directing head, is to occupy a position rare in any age. Catherine had the genius of friendship, as she had the genius for leadership—a leadership without fuss, ostentation or pose. In our day the religious woman, as the worldly, is all too likely to be too much absorbed with the various businesses and activities of her vocation to make and hold many friends. Acquaintances in plenty, but few devoted, understanding and understood friends—true soul-intimates—form the social circle of even the most admired among us. And it is a joy indeed to meet by the way of life one human creature, whose affection, brightness and sweet purity transfigure all existence for us. Catherine was a "Mamma" who irradiated all destiny for her children. Holy women as well as just men were among her followers. Some of these, chiefly Alexia Saraceni, a young widow of noble family, and Lisa Benincasa, also a widow and a sister-in-law, both Sisters of Penance and life-long friends of Catherine, went with her everywhere. She never appeared in public or, except in the plague-time and under stress of a real emergency, passed to an allotted task, without

one or more sisters of the Mantellate at her side. Alexia and another well-born widow, Cecca Gori, were helpers with her in her missionary efforts to seek and save those that were lost and they both acted as her secretaries at times. But by far the greater part of her correspondence was in the hands of certain young men of culture, talent and perception, who found anchorage for their drifting lives and inspiration for righteous use of their intellectual forces, in the holy virgin who for all her zeal and fervour was always cheerful, and, although she could be sharply critical and reprimanding, showed often a most womanly indulgence for these same wayward, sensitive, madcap, over-hopeful and over-despondent sons of hers. Catherine seems to have held the faith that the world would yield more to the dominion of youth and manhood than it would ever give up to age and femininity. Never was she done urging people—women as well as men —to be manly. She prized virility in all, and scouted, whether in monk or friar, man of the world or member of a government, priest, prelate, pope or king, anything of the nature of effeminacy. It was undoubtedly Catherine's admiration of the manly and her faith in men, that gave her so much influence over them. Such little spite as she had against the male sex in her cell days, when her knowledge of it was limited, and she was yet in rebellion against the notion of her personality being butchered to make a sultan-bridegroom's holiday, died away under a wider knowledge of men, even though that knowledge included so much that was vile and bad in them. Yet her relationships with them in no sense

assailed her independence of thought and freedom of will.

Dante died in Ravenna twenty-six years before Catherine was born. He had been in Siena in the first year of the century and received there the sentence of his banishment from Florence. Only two or three years later appeared his "Vita Nuova," which rehearsed in reflective manhood many dreams and faiths concerning his "Blessed Lady," that must often have been spoken of between himself and those intimates of his youth, with whom he longed to sail away into an enchanted sphere there to discourse for ever of love and be for ever happy. It is noteworthy that his dream was to *discourse* of love and that Beatrice, in his visions of her, appeared to him so transcendent in her graciousness and virtue that he could only wait and pray to be worthy to write concerning her, what had never yet been written concerning woman. This then was the attitude of many poet-souls of Tuscany in the days when the blind chivalry of mediæval romantics was giving place to the more illumined respects of an age re-born in knowledge, learning and the arts. Dante, Giotto, Guido, Lapa and the rest, in Florence; and Neri, Stefano, Bartolommeo, and other informed and visionary youths in Siena, all felt the stirrings of a maiden passion for the pure, the virtuous and the integral in human nature that is most fully and most beautifully presented in the life and character of some noble-minded woman, and particularly in a woman in whom Renascent qualities of an illuminated mind are uplifted and inspired by Gothic ideals of godliness, and self-abnegation. As Beatrice guided Dante from low valleys of self-

seeking to high mounts of noble thinking and righteous doing, so Catherine, a pillar of fire by night and of cloud by day, inspired and comforted —and with individual tenderness and consideration —the members of the flock she led from the bondage of self-love into the glorious liberty of love of their neighbour. But with this difference from Beatrice did Catherine appeal to her adorers on behalf of all the virtues and all the sanctities of life, that, whereas Beatrice was the more or less unconscious sun of Dante's existence, Catherine's light of leading and learning was most consciously uplifted. She was at once, honoured President of a "college" for students of the art and mystery of Christian living and very dear "Mamma" of a household of faith in which many virtue-lovers were joined together.

In illustration of her methods of training and influencing her disciples, we may take passages from just two or three letters.

To Neri Di Landoccio dei Pagliaresi, her poet-secretary, who was of questioning and desponding temperament, she wrote on one occasion: "Thou knowest that confusion is wholly discordant with the doctrine which has always been given thee. It is a leprosy that dries up soul and body, and holds them in continual affliction, and binds the arms of holy desire, and does not let one do what one would; and it makes the soul unendurable to itself, disposing the mind to conflicts and varying fantasies; it robs the soul of supernatural light, and darkens its natural light. So one falls into great faithlessness because one does not know the truth of God, in which He created us—that is, that he created us in

truth to give us life eternal. Then with living faith, with holy desire, and with hope in the Blood of Christ, let the devil of confusion be defeated."

And again: ". . . may thy mind be pacified concerning all the mysteries of God, as thou beholdest the ineffable love which moved Him to draw forth from Himself reasonable creatures and to give us His image and likeness, and to buy us with the blood of the humble and spotless Lamb. Thus doing, thou wilt hold all that happens to thee in due reverence, and in true humility thou wilt deny mere appearances, when sometimes through the illusion of the devil things seem to thee to get out of their right proportion, through thy many mental occupations and sweet, physical torments. I say no more. Remain in the holy and sweet grace of God. May Christ the Blessed give thee His eternal benediction."

To Stephen Maconi, another secretary and very dear "son," whose gay, boyish spirits and most sociable inclinations made him hesitate long before entering irrevocably on the monastic life, she wrote once: "Resist no longer the Holy Spirit that is calling thee—for it will be hard for thee to kick against Him. Do not let thyself be withheld by thine own lukewarm heart, or by a womanish tenderness for thyself, but be a man, and enter the battlefield manfully." And in Rome, in the midst of much official and high political correspondence, she sent to this "dearest son" of hers a hot transcript of thoughts wrung from her by her ever-recurring desire to see him a true guardian of the city of his soul. "Oh, dearest son, this city has many gates! they are three: Memory, Intellect and Will, and our

Creator allows all of them to be battered, and sometimes opened by violence, except one—that is Will. So it happens at times that the intellect sees nothing but shadows; the memory is occupied with vain and transitory things, with many and varied reflections and impure thoughts; and likewise all the sensations of the body are ill-regulated and ravaging.

"So it is perfectly clear that no one of these gates is in our own free possession, except only the gate of Will. This belongs to our liberties, and has for its Watch Free-will. And this gate is so strong that nor demon nor creature can open it if the Watch does not consent. And while this gate is not open—that is, while it does not consent to what Memory and Intellect and the other gates experience—our city keeps its free privileges for ever. Let us then recognise, my son, let us recognise so excellent a benefit and so unmeasured a largess of charity as we have received from the Divine Goodness that has put us in free possession of so noble a city.

"Let us strive to hold good and zealous watch, keeping at the side of our Watch Free-will, the dog Conscience who when anyone comes at the gate must awake Reason by its barking, that she may discern whether it be friend or foe, so that the Watch may let friends enter, ordering good and holy inspirations to do their work, and may drive away the foes, locking the gate of Will, that it consent not to admit the evil thoughts that come to the gate every day. And when thy city shall be demanded of thee by the Lord, thou canst give it up, sound and adorned with time and royal virtues, thanks to His grace. I say no more here."

But at another time, Catherine had more to say to this hesitating son, for whom the world, in which he was so popular, still had attractions, yet who was never quite satisfied to be a worldling. He had written to his "Mother" from excommunicated Siena to ask for indulgences that he might hear Mass celebrated. Catherine had already wearied the officials of the papal court, asking for such indulgences for friends in her native city, but not for that reason did she refuse to apply for yet another for her "dearest son." He was trying his "Mother" very greatly, delaying to come to the sacred city, upon excuses that showed him unwilling yet to forsake all things—home, kindred, and family business—for Christ crucified, although expressing more compunction than ever concerning the state of his soul.

"As to the indulgences I promised to get for you," she wrote, "do not expect them, or anything else from me until you come yourself. I do not say I will refuse to help you in your spiritual needs: God knows I never desired to do so more ardently than now; never have I more earnestly offered you to God, for I never knew you need it more. You say that your present state displeases you, when it *really* displeases you, you will quit it. Then you will show that you know your state, which up to the present time you have been ignorant of."

How well he came to know his state, and to change it, there is no need to tell here. He, like still another holding the office of secretary to the Saint in life and memorialiser of her after death, could not escape out of her hands. About Stephen's neck, as over that of Francesco Malavolti, she

put "such a yoke" that he was never able to slip out of it. The case of Francesco was however a very different one from that of merry, chatty Stefano. He was a man who had lived "lasciviously and unrestrainedly," and at the time of his first going to the Saint, through the persuasion of his friend, Neri, he was "not a little fiery and daring," by reason of his influential kindred and noble birth. When Catherine told him of the yoke she had put on him from which he would never escape, he had wife and children. Nevertheless he had but recently slipped back into grave immorality. He was now repentant and ashamed, yet unconverted, undetermined. Catherine had the desire of finding again this lost sheep and wrote to him:

". . . I have a very great desire of putting thee back into the fold with thy companions. It seems to me that the devil has so robbed me of thee that thou dost not let thyself be found; and I, thy miserable mother, go seeking and sending for thee, because I would fain take thee upon my shoulders, by reason of the bitter sorrow and compassion that I have for thy soul. Open the eye of thy understanding, dearest son, raise it from darkness and recognise thy fault, not with confusion of mind, but with knowledge of thyself and with hope in the goodness of God. . . . Do not let thyself be deceived by the devil through fear or shame. Break this entanglement. Come, come, dearest son: I can well call thee *dear*, so much art thou costing me in tears and labour, and in much bitter sorrow. Ah, come, my sweet son, and return to the fold. I plead my excuse before God, for I can do no more. In coming and staying, I am

asking nothing from thee, save that thou wouldst do the will of God. I say no more. May Christ Jesus console thee with thyself and me with thee."

These phrases show with what loving, firm authority Catherine ruled the lives of these sons of hers. They gave her trouble often and showed her, as sons will, that they had ideas and thoughts apart from hers, but in the end it was with them all as she prophesied, in that playful way which veiled but did not disguise so much of Catherine's earnestness, it would be with Franceso Malavolti, she put such a yoke upon their necks that they never slipped away. All were fast bound at last in the bonds of religious service; each one in the place to which his nature and disposition fitted him and each one, we may be sure, as her convert and pupil, vowed to a life of charity as well as to an existence of self-denial.

To her wonderful position in the mental world and to her awful authority in spiritual things, Catherine came not only by her talents and virtues. The best of the youth, the most aristocratic in the intellectual and religious, as well as in the racial sense, of Siena, as of all the Italian commonwealths of the time, were looking for a prophet of better things to be for Italy and for humankind. The fact that their leader to the promised land of a reformed Church and a re-edified country came neither as a mighty man of war, nor as a poet-philosopher of extensive erudition, but wore the guise of a sensitive, discerning and almost illiterate woman, seemed no wonder to minds accustomed to the cult of the Virgin Mary and familiar with both Dante's and Petrarch's worship of the "blessed," and de-

lightful among the women of their acquaintance. Moreover, the return, for a season, of one pope to Rome had but just been brought about by the clamour of another of the sex that only in the aggregate can be deemed despised.

Birgitte, Queen of Sweden—St Bridget—had died in 1373. Though Catherine makes no mention of this princess in her letters, she must have known of the rhapsodical exhortations addressed by Birgitte to Pope Urban V. at Avignon, and had perhaps an idea that she was taking up the work laid down at her death by the Swedish seer, when she herself began publicly to urge the bringing back of the pontifical court to Rome. Moreover, the measure of Birgitte's success in drawing Urban V. for a time to the Apostolic See, could but have been an encouragement to Catherine to entice thither a pope who should never more, either in his own person or in that of his successors, depart thence. Yet a work a queen might undertake boldly, required a special courage and a particular confidence in a dyer's daughter. Catherine's full entry into political life was not yet. Not yet, also, had Pope Gregory XI. bethought him to replace the lately deceased queen-prophetess from the far north land with the living *beata popolana* of the near southern city, in a certain office to which it has been the policy of many governments in many ages to call some supple ones and in which the court of Rome, very frequently, employed a woman. This office of an exhortative guide of public opinion and an ambassador unaccredited by the usual signs-manual, was, in the absence of a press or a pulpit of

sufficient influence or veniality and through lack of an orator of sufficient subtlety, occasionally, in the time of papal decadence, foisted upon a woman. Not that the pontifical court stood alone among governments in making use of ambassadresses whom it was easy to discredit and to disregard, if things did not go near enough or, in view of subsequent developments, went too near to their instructions.

Although some incidents of later date have been cited in illustration of Catherine's character's development and modification, we have not yet come in this study of her story, to the point of her entry into political life. It is true that in their "college," she and her disciples must have talked together often of the infinite need of a united Italy and a Christendom at peace; must have deplored the dangers for Church and State, of a Spiritual Father under the dominion of temporalities and of changeable democracies setting themselves up as religious authorities. But Catherine never thought of seeking for herself any post from which she could urge her views on her compatriots or of claiming any right of stirring up her fellow-Christians to revolt against the shepherds who gave no water to their flocks and fouled the residue with the feet of their avarice, impurity and pride. No, she kept on doing the duties that were nearest at hand; responding according to her opportunity and power to the calls that were made on her from without, observing, doing, contemplating, praying and reading.

In the midst of so many busy occupations, Catherine rejoiced still in the study of Holy Scripture

and no modern "Evangelical" of the most Bible-searching school—such a one for instance as Frances Ridley Havergal—could have written anything more personal and rapturous regarding a text, than did Catherine, near to this time, about "God is Love." It was in a letter to Brother Bartolommeo Dominici—the friar who had been a confessor of hers before Father Raymund entered into that office, and the same who had testified to the rebuking effect of her pure presence on the carnal passions of youth—that the Saint wrote: "I summon you to enter through this most ardent charity, a sea that is peaceful and profound. This I have just now found anew—not that the sea is new, but that it is new to me in the feeling of my soul—in that word, God is love. And in this word, as the mirror reflects the face of man, and the sun its light upon the earth, so it is reflected in my soul, that all his works, whatsoever are Love alone, for they are not wrought of anything save love. Therefore He says, 'I God am Love.' From this a light is thrown on the unsearchable mystery of the Incarnate Word, who by force of love was given with such humility that it confounds my pride, and teaches us not to regard His works, but the burning devotion of the Word given to us."

There is perhaps no more resemblance between Catherine's unconscious genius in poetical exposition of Bible phrases and the more conscious craft of "F.R.H.," than lies between the verses of the Psalmist David and those of Dr Watts. Yet "F.R.H." was an ecstatic and true woman. She had not the peculiar mental and physical afflictions that sometimes accompany, and are considered by

many to indicate, great sanctity, but she had her infirmities of body. Much of her work was carried on in a rhapsody that defied physical limitations. And Frances showed herself of the same spirit as Catherine, when she wrote, in regard to her hymn, *O Master, at Thy feet, I bow in rapture sweet*—"Men may feel differently, but a true woman's submission is inseparable from deep love."

For the King of Glory who must reign until He has put all things under His feet, Catherine ever worked, counting her body as dead; studying, applying and interpreting the things of the soul. Her ways remained so winning, her words so direct and yet so tempered with the love she bore her neighbour; her pity for all the afflicted, the depressed and the restless of mankind kept always so instinctive, that great families—usually through the introduction of some member who had come beneath the sway of Catherine's personal kindness and interest—sought her help in the healing of divisions and the making of peace. So gently did she reason, so sympathetically understand, so persistently plead, that many, even of the true *vendetta* type, were brought to see and to abhor the hideous aspect of a family at feud. When sulky parties to disputes and quarrels would not listen to her, she prayed for them, and the woman on her knees or prone upon the ground, humbly appealing to a Strength above and beyond her, moved the offended and sullen ones more than arguments could have done.

Of her success as a peacemaker, the Pope at Avignon heard. Catherine had become a force to be reckoned with in the disposition of the

spiritual things of northern Italy—perhaps of all Italy. Gregory XI. bethought him that she who could reconcile proud families, might bring to the papal feet communities in rebellion against ecclesiastical control. Besides, if she failed, he could easily repudiate a woman's pledges. Catherine could not but think it an act for a Bride of Christ to seek peace and ensue it. She departed on her first embassy, accompanied by her mother, by Alexia, Lisa, Cecca and other "sisters," and by Father Raymund and the Friars Tommaso della Fonte and Bartolommeo Dominici.

She was twenty-eight years old, lacking one month—a ripe age for an Italian maid in the *trecento*, but a callow one at any time for an emissary of State—when she reached Pisa in February 1375. She was received by the Cardinal Legate and by Pietro Gambacorti, the President of the Pisan Republic, with all the honours of State due to an ambassador from the Sovereign Pontiff, and the populace rendered her the homage which her own reputation as a peacemaker, saint and wonder-worker, called forth. It was not only the multitude that looks ever for a sign, that acclaimed her, though undoubtedly the fame of her miracles roused much awe and curiosity, particularly among the more idle and the least well-informed. All the inhabitants of Pisa were ready to welcome a healer of feuds. For reasons of trade, as well as for causes of religion, the Pisans desired neither a quarrel with the Pope nor a bad understanding with the Florentines. Yet Florence was now seeking to draw into a league of resistance to papal onslaughts on civil liberties, all the republic cities

of Tuscany and some that were situated in the papal states themselves.

A popular demonstration was not to the taste of Catherine, but her public life had begun. Both as emissary of the Pope and as Bride of the Blessed, she accepted testimonies of peculiar deference as the dues of a representative of "Christ on Earth" and Christ in Heaven. So greatly was she venerated, that even her admiring Father Raymund was scandalised by her presumption in giving her hand so frequently to be kissed. One wonders why he was so shocked, seeing that to this day the kissing of a priest's—to say nothing of a bishop's or *nuncio's*—hand is a common form of respectful salutation in Italy and among Roman Catholic congregations generally. But to see a woman in the garb of a religious, behave so freely and respond with so much emotion to the prostrations of penitents, and the adorations of loyal sons and daughters of Holy Church, grated on a conservative sense of the fitness of things. Catherine told her confessor when he remonstrated with her: "I hardly notice what they do, and through God's grace it does not please (*i.e.* flatter) me; I consider only the good affection that brings them to me, and thank the Divine Goodness that thus moves them, praying that He may perfect and fulfil those desires which He has inspired. I marvel how a creature, knowing itself to be a creature, can have vainglory."

And truly, though Catherine was on a political mission, she was ever following her more womanly and more Christian vocation of raising up the downcast, converting the sinner and bringing the repentant to the feet of their Saviour.

Pisa, for a student of the life and character of Catherine Benincasa, is the place of the parting of the ways. The history of her days in that city at this time, reveals to us a new Catherine. The Saint, or natural woman in her most illuminated and sanctified aspect, becomes also the politician, or woman of artifices and affairs. The lines of Catherine's twofold career divided at Pisa. Thenceforward, they ran parallel, and never again united.

As Mrs Drane most thoughtfully points out, Catherine came gradually to the position she occupied in Pisa, although all the steps that led her to it are not now traceable. Three years before, she had had occasion to write to the Pope's chief legate in Italy, Cardinal d'Estaing, and in the following extract from her letter then it is to be seen that she wrote to him as one who had authority, and not as a mere scribe of the views and directions of others :—

"I would have you then, like a true son and servant, brought back by the blood of Christ crucified, follow His footsteps, with manly heart and ready zeal, never turning aside by reason either of pain or pleasure, but persevering even to the end in this, and in every other work which you undertake to do for Christ crucified. Strive to extirpate the iniquities and the miseries of the world, which come from the many sins that men commit, by which the name of God is shamed; do your utmost as one hungry for His honour and for the salvation of your neighbour, to find a remedy for all this."

And again:

"Strive manfully, to the utmost of your power, to bring about the peace and union of the whole country. And if, for this holy work, it were necessary to give the life of the body, it should be given a thousand times, if it were possible. It is a terrible thing to think and hear and see that we are at war with God, by reason of the multitude of the sins of the subjects and their pastors, and also in corporeal war by reason of the rebellion that has arisen against Holy Church. Where all faithful Christians should be preparing to make war upon the infidels, false Christians are waging it against each other; and the servants of God cannot contain themselves for grief and bitterness at seeing the damnation of souls who are perishing for this, and the demons are rejoicing, because they see what they want to see. Verily, then, it is time to give our lives in imitation of the Master of Truth, and to care nought for honour or shame that the world would give us, in painful torments and death of the body. I am certain that you will do this manfully, if you are clothed with the new man, Christ Jesus, and stripped of the old, to wit, of your own sensuality; for then you will have cast off servile fear; in no other way would you ever do it, but would rather fall into the very sins I have named. Considering, then, that it was necessary for you to be a virile man, and without any fear, and freed from self-love (for you are put by God in an office that demands no fear save that which is holy); therefore I said to you that I desired to see you manful and not timorous. . . . Dearest father, make the Holy Father consider the loss of souls more than that

of cities; for God demands souls more than cities."

This letter to the zealous and high-minded d'Estaing was followed shortly by one to a nephew of the Pope—du Puy, Abbot of Marmontier, the tyrant of Perugia. "This detestable monk," as Professor Edmund Gardner names him, and tells us further that he had been "the intermediary between the Pope and Birgitta" and was now bidden to approach Catherine, was pretending, at the time, to be repentant of his sins and Catherine wrote to him: "I, your unworthy daughter, have taken and will take the debt of your sins upon myself, and we shall burn yours and mine together in the fire of sweet charity, where they are consumed." She told him further: "You must chiefly labour together with the Holy Father, to the utmost of your power, in removing the wolves and incarnate demons of pastors who attend to nought save eating and goodly palaces and stout horses. Alas, that what Christ acquired upon the wood of the Cross is spent upon harlots! I pray that, even if you have to die for it, you tell the Holy Father to find a remedy for such great iniquities, and when the time comes to make pastors and Cardinals, not to make them for the sake of flattery nor for money, nor for simony; but with all your power, pray him to heed and consider whether he finds virtue and good and holy repute in the man, and not to consider whether he is noble or plebeian; for virtue is the thing that makes man noble and pleasing to God." And even as Birgitta had done, Catherine sent a message to the gentle Pontiff at Avignon, to

refrain from the "excessive tenderness and solicitude for kinsmen" that led him to put his relatives in office, simply because they were relatives.

To the arrogant Beatrice, upstart wife of the upstart Bernabó Visconti, Catherine also dictated an epistle, urging her to become the instrument of reconciling her husband to the Pope and leading him to a better way of life. She had an appeal to make also to the profligate Giovanna, Queen of Naples, to join the cause of Holy Church, and send troops to Palestine.

Part of the authority of these words of Catherine came undoubtedly from her Woman's heart burning with indignation against evils and deceptions practised on the "little ones" of the flock and from her Saint's soul yearning for the purification of the Household of her Lord. But she wrote also as a passed student of the social mind and as an accredited exponent of popular ideas. With similar authority, she enjoined Bernabó Visconti, who was the tyrant leader of the rebellion Catherine deplored in her letter to D'Estaing: "Do nothing I charge you, then, against your Head. The devil will persuade you that you may and ought to punish the faults of wicked pastors. Believe him not, and lay not your hands on those who are the Lord's anointed. He reserves that right to Himself, and has confided it to His Vicar." Yet what a hard task Catherine was finding it, to stir up this Vicar to punish faults of wicked pastors! However, she was loyal to the Pope, as Pope. "You must now come to the help of him you have hitherto resisted," she told Visconti. "The holy Father is raising the standard of the holy Cross—it is his one wish and

desire. Do you be the first to solicit him to carry out this enterprise."

In these letters to cardinal, abbot, autocrat and two women of destiny and power, the divergence of the politician from the woman, the agent of public business from the saint, is certainly to be noted. But in Pisa in 1375 her double career appears suddenly in full development; her two offices in life in sharp contrast.

All women who enter into active, political life do so at a cost to them—whether or not they know they pay it—of virtues that are of more importance than any tasks of statesmanship they can accomplish, and of graces that are of higher value than any celebrity they may attain, either as individuals or as representatives of their sex. Though impelled to political jostlings, as some are, by the very force of their womanly sympathy and compassion, it is nevertheless the case that, once in the political scrimmage, it is hard for a female to remain feminine, harder still for a saint to keep saintly. In the abstract it need not be so. In practice it almost invariably is. For politics are ever a warfare of parties, a clashing of many interests—nearly all of them selfish—an aggression of nation against nation, an assault of race upon race.

Civic and philanthropic offices of a purely administrative, or a purely remedial nature, may be taken as without the domain of politics proper. To the vocation of a constitutional sovereign, of a mayor of a not too commercial borough, of an examiner in a Royal Commission, or a supervisor of schools, homes for orphans, the sick and

what not, as well as to any calling in which the pity, judgment, industry, kindness and economy of a woman may be freely exercised and the sanctity of a saint remain unimpaired, a woman may dedicate herself by right of her womanhood, a saint give her life by virtue of her saintliness. But from the common frays of countries and policies, classes and masses, sexes and sects, it becomes the woman, and it behoves the saint to keep aloof. To perform aright the function of the woman in human society, as to live aright the life of the saint, there must be some apartness. Only as queen or handmaid, as a queen-regnant over a household and a family or as "a servant and slave of the servants of Jesus Christ"—and she that would be greatest among us must be servant of all—is woman essentially woman. That many women, from circumstances of character or environment, fall short of either dignity is no argument that they are made for other destinies. Because upon some women is laid the cross of being the competitors instead of the helpmeets of men, of leading a fighting cause instead of ensuing a peaceful one, is no proof that these had not been better women—truer to the race and to themselves—if they had been co-operators and not rivals, peacemakers and not Amazons.

Catherine as the Prophetess of things Divine and as Seer of the evils that contaminated human character and human institutions; Catherine as the Peacemaker, between man and man, family and family, political part and political party, Church and State, was Catherine the Woman and Catherine the Saint. But Catherine as the mouthpiece of a

policy, as the ambassadress of a potentate, as the puppet of a political organisation, was lower than the divine Mother of Souls she had come to be and less than the Holy Maid she had been.

Yet for this declension we must compassionate more than blame her. She had the malleable nature which is the truly feminine. She was led by her holy obedience. She was swayed by the spirit of her place and time. For long, friends in Pisa had called to her to go to them to compose differences in their town, as she had done in Siena. But Catherine had respected her sex and calling. It seemed to her neither maidenly nor religious to go gadding from her own place. It was only upon the injunction of her "dear Daddy" ("Babbo mio") the great Pontiff at Avignon, that she set forth at last and, since calls multiplied and opportunities opened out, she made from there a visit to Lucca, for these two cities, Pisa and Lucca, with Siena, still resisted the Florentine allurements to join their league of free cities against the Pope.

The first of the letters of Catherine addressed to a pope, that has come down to us, was written after her return from Pisa in the late autumn of 1375. It is a clear reflex of the state of the writer's mind at the time and shows us the relations in which she stood to the Church she so greatly venerated and the commonwealths she could not misunderstand as the court at Avignon misunderstood them although she herself—*la beata Popolana*—failed to observe the tendency of popular governments or to forecast the inevitable end of national movements.

Though in a tone of deep respect, Catherine

began the letter with an exhortation addressed by her many times to many people—the exhortation to obtain knowledge of self. "For the soul that knows itself, humbles itself, because it sees nothing to be proud of; and ripens the sweet fruit of very ardent charity, recognising in itself the unmeasured goodness of God; and aware that it is not, attributes all its being to Him who Is. Whence, then, it seems that the soul is constrained to love what God loves and to hate what God hates." Then after enlarging on this theme and bidding the Pontiff neither to plaster vice over nor to correct his clergy with coldness or lukewarmness, she concluded with very practical counsels and directions, telling him that if, up to this time, he has not stood very firm, she prays in truth that the moment of time that remains, "be dealt with manfully."

"And fear not, father, for anything that may result from these tempestuous winds that are now beating against you, from those decaying members which have rebelled against you. Fear not; for divine aid is near. Have a care for spiritual things alone, for good shepherds and good rulers in your cities—since on account of bad shepherds and rulers you have encountered rebellion. Give us, then, a remedy; and comfort you in Christ Jesus, and fear not. Press on, and fulfil with true zeal and holy what you have begun with a holy resolve, concerning your return, and the holy and sweet crusade. And delay no longer, for many difficulties have occurred through delay, and the devil has risen up to prevent these things being done, because he perceives his own loss. Up then, father, and no more negligence! Raise the gonfalon of the most

holy Cross, for with the fragrance of the Cross you shall win peace. I beg you to summon those who have rebelled against you to a holy peace, so that all warfare may be turned against the infidels. I hope by the infinite goodness of God that He will swiftly send His aid. Comfort you, comfort you and come, come, to console the poor, the servants of God, your sons! . . .

"I beg you to send to Lucca and to Pisa with fatherly proposals, as God shall instruct you, supporting them so far as can be, and summoning them to remain firm and persevering. I have been at Pisa and at Lucca, up to now, influencing them as much as I can not to make a league with the decaying members that are rebelling against you: but they are in great perplexity, because they have no comfort from you, and are constantly urged to make it and threatened from the contrary side. However, up to the present time, they have not wholly consented. I beg you also to write emphatically to Messer Pietro: and do it zealously, and do not delay. I say no more."

CHAPTER XII

From the political letters of Catherine, quoted in the last chapter, it is seen that she early had the thought to promote peace in Christendom by joining the nations of the Cross in a common cause against the Turks who held the Holy Land and were insidiously and determinately pushing their way westward. At the time she went to Pisa, these infidels were already spread over the Grecian Empire and were bringing their merchandise and their tenets into many Italian ports. And in that city she met and conversed with the Ambassador of the Queen of Cyprus, who had much to tell of the menace to all Europe, and particularly to the island from which he came, of the "infidel dog" Catherine so greatly desired to see not only chased out of Europe, but won over to the Christian faith. For another reason too—more shrewdly politic or more largely spiritual as it may be regarded—she longed that the Holy Father should uplift the gonfalon of the Holy Cross. ". . . for as we were freed by the Cross," she wrote a little later to the Pope, "thus raising this standard, which seems to me the refreshment of Christians, we shall be freed—we from our wars and divisions and many sins, the infidel people from their infidelity. In this way you will come and attain the reformation, giving good priests to Holy Church."

In this way, Catherine therefore trusted that the

reform of Holy Church and the unification of Italy would be obtained. The nations of the West joined together against the Saracenic inroad on territory and faith, would be by the mere act of their assembly freed from wars and divisions among themselves, and the Pope, at the head of this great army, would hold an undisputed sway and be himself free from the dominion of France. Thus, he could return to Rome and, unresisted, begin that reconstitution of Christian society and renovation of priestly life which Catherine ardently longed to promote. It was patriotism, not Protestantism, that prompted so many of the Italian communes —and in particular Florence—to hinder, even to oppose, the coming to Italy of a Cæsar who, far from having conquered all Gaul, was himself a Frenchman and the sovereign of a court under strong Gallic influence. As a Cæsar in his own right—the right of that ecclesiastical system of which he was the natural head—or as a Cæsar by virtue of his commandership of an army of many nationalities, Gregory XI. would not have been the tyrant to be flouted that he appeared to many quite staunchly Catholic persons who were also staunchly Italian. Yet it was as a spiritual leader, not a temporal one, that he would have been the more generally welcome by the best spirits of the time. As a spiritual leader certainly Catherine longed to see him enthroned in fatherless Italy.

It had been an old plan of the papacy to revive *prestige* and restore dominion by the preaching of a Crusade that should have the effect in its organisation of subduing faction and strife among the "faithful" and making the kings of the earth

lieutenants of the Pontiff in an army of twofold conquering power. An old policy too—though not on that account an unworthy one—was that which Catherine applied, even as ardently as she used all means of grace which for her were Christian, when she sought to deter the wandering bands of free-lances which then infested Italy from harassing the strength and draining the resources of cities loyal to the Pope, and from what was still worse, serving under rebellious princes and republics, in attacks on papal strongholds.

In many letters from Pisa and from Siena, shortly after her return there at this time, we have evidence of how industriously and how cleverly Catherine toiled there for these ends of hoary policy —toiled from her very arrival, as it would seem by every inference of her letters and of the circumstances of the times—as an agent of the Holy Father to whom progress was constantly reported either directly or indirectly, and who was so frequently supplicated by Catherine to fulfil the intentions which had been announced to her as his and which had rejoiced her as corresponding so closely to her own dreams of things.

To her "daughters" in Siena the Saint wrote: "The affairs of the Crusade are going constantly better and better, and the honour of God is increasing every day. Increase constantly in virtue and furnish the ship of your soul, for our time draws near. . . . Now this very day the ambassador of the Queen of Cyprus came and talked to me. He is going to the Holy Father, Christ on earth, to urge him concerning the affairs of the holy Crusade. And, moreover, the Holy Father has

sent to Genoa to urge them concerning the same thing."

"To Messer Giovanni (*i.e.* Sir John Hawkwood) the Soldier of Fortune," who had but lately, with his band of mercenaries, been in the papal service, but had been dismissed upon the conclusion of a truce with the outrageous Bernabó Visconti, and was now listening to invitations to aid Florence and other cities in revolt against the oppressive rule of papal legates, Catherine sent Father Raymund, with a letter to urge the free-lance to take the Cross should the Holy Father proclaim a Crusade. Her words are as peremptory as a trumpet-call, as sweet as a bird's song.

"Now my soul desires that you should change your way of life, and take the pay and the cross of Christ crucified, you and all your followers and companions; so that you may be Christ's company to march against the infidel dogs who possess our Holy Place, where rested the Sweet Primal Truth and bore death and pains for us.

"I beg you, then, gently in Christ Jesus, that since God and also our Holy Father have ordered a crusade against the infidels, and you take such pleasure in war and fighting, you should not make war against Christians any more—for this is a wrong to God; but go against the infidels! For it is a great cruelty that we who are Christians, and members bound in the Body of Holy Church, should persecute one another. We are not to do so; but to rise with perfect zeal, and to uplift ourselves above every evil thought.

"I marvel much that you, having, as I heard, promised to be willing to go to die for Christ in this

holy crusade, are wanting to make war in these parts. This is not that holy disposition which God demands from you if you are to go to so holy and venerable a place. It seems to me that you ought now, at this present time, to dispose you to virtue, until the time shall come for us and the others who shall be ready to give their lives to Christ, and thus you shall show that you are a manly and true knight."

And then after a few words of commendation of her messenger, Father Raymund, she added: "I beg you, dearest brother, to keep in memory the shortness of your time."

So even the swashbuckler—perhaps particularly when he was to be persuaded to further Catherine's dearest design—was for the Saint a "dearest brother." No wonder that we read that before Father Raymund left, he had from "Messer Giovanni" and the "other captains" a "promise on the Sacrament that they would go to the Holy Land" should it happen that others should go. And the knight and the captains signed the promise with their hands and sealed it with their seals.

No wonder also seeing how eloquently Catherine could voice a plea, and how attractively she could present a case, that there should have been at least one "man of no small reputation among spiritual persons" who bade her beware lest the temptation of prophetical speech enthralled her, and who prayed that the "loving, divine light" might so guard her along her way that her soul might take its stand "upon the truth alone." It was to the anchorite-poet who penned these words and many other sentences of caution that Catherine wrote the letter,

already quoted, in which she defended herself against the suggestions that she practised some deception in the matter of her eating—perhaps it would be more correct to say her starving.

Returned at last from Pisa and Lucca, Catherine followed her first letter to Gregory XI. with others in which we trace her natural woman's indignation with the Pope's delay in carrying out the projects he had caused her to know he intended and which —especially after her fancy had caressed them and her eager anticipation had rendered them, for her, things all but accomplished—it was hard indeed for her to see played with and almost abandoned.

"I tell you, on behalf of Christ crucified," she wrote at last, "it befits you to achieve three chief things through your power. Do you uproot in the garden of Holy Church the malodorous flowers, full of impurity and avarice, swollen with pride: that is the bad priests and rulers who poison and rot that garden. Ah me, you our governor, do you use your power to pluck out those flowers! Throw them away that they may have no rule! Insist that they study to rule themselves in holy and good life. Plant in this garden fragrant flowers, priests and rulers who are true servants of Jesus Christ and care for nothing but the honour of God and the salvation of souls, and are fathers of the poor. Alas, what confusion is this, to see those who ought to be a mirror of voluntary poverty, meek as lambs, distributing the possessions of Holy Church to the poor: and they appear in such luxury and state and pomp and worldly vanity, more than if they had turned them to the world a thousand times! Nay many seculars put them to

shame who live a good and holy life. But it seems that the Highest and Eternal Goodness is having that done by force which is not done by love; it seems that He is permitting dignities and luxuries to be taken away from His Bride, as if He would show that Holy Church should return to her first condition, poor, humble and meek as she was in that holy time when men took note of nothing but the honour of God and the salvation of souls, caring for spiritual things and not for temporal. For ever since she has aimed more at temporal than at spiritual, things have gone from bad to worse. See therefore that God, in judgment, has allowed much persecution and tribulation to befall her. But comfort you, father, and fear not for anything that could happen, which God does to make her state perfect once more, in order that lambs may feed in that garden, and not wolves who devour the honour that should belong to God which they steal and give to themselves. Comfort you in Christ sweet Jesus. . . . Out of war you will attain greatest peace; out of persecution, greatest unity; not by human power, but by holy virtue, you will discomfit those visible demons, wicked men, and those invisible demons who never sleep around us.

"But reflect, sweet father, that you could not do this easily unless you accomplished the other two things which precede the completion of the other: that is your return to Rome and uplifting of the standard of the most holy Cross. Let not your holy desire fail on account of any scandal of rebellion of cities which you might see or hear; nay let the flame of holy desire be more kindled to wish to do swiftly. Do not delay then your coming. . . .

Respond to the Holy Spirit who calls you. I tell you, come, come, come, and do not wait for time, since time does not wait for you. Then you will do like the Lamb Slain whose place you hold, who without weapons in His hand slew our foes, coming in gentleness, using only the weapons of the strength of love, aiming only at care of spiritual things, and restoring grace to man who had lost it through sin."

It is in this letter that Catherine most plainly shows it to have become her conviction that neither peace for Christendom, unity for Italy nor virtue for society were to be obtained, unless first there was accomplished the return of the Pontiff to Rome and the uplifting of the standard of the Cross. And so to her ardour as a saint was added her ardour as a politician.

Yet all the while that outward policies and contrivances of expediency were engaging her attention and demanding her service, her inner life of the spirit did not falter. She travelled from Pisa to the island of Gorgona, where there was a Carthusian monastery, the prior of which desired his monks to hear her speak. Her discourse was of the temptations and trials of the enclosed life—a favourite theme and one on which she had always some illuminating thought to express. On this occasion, so penetrating was her vision and so inspired her utterance, that the prior declared afterwards to Father Raymund that if Catherine had heard the confession of each one of the brothers, as he himself had done, she could not have more nearly understood their cases or more clearly spoken the exact word of reproof, exhortation and comfort needed by each one.

Then there was the case of one—Andrea—a little brand snatched by her from the burning of an immoral life, who was in the care of two good "daughters" of Catherine — "Catarina of the Hospital and Giovanna Di Capo—and who had begun to find the life of virtue a little dull and so was in danger of plunging back into 'the filth of impurity.'"

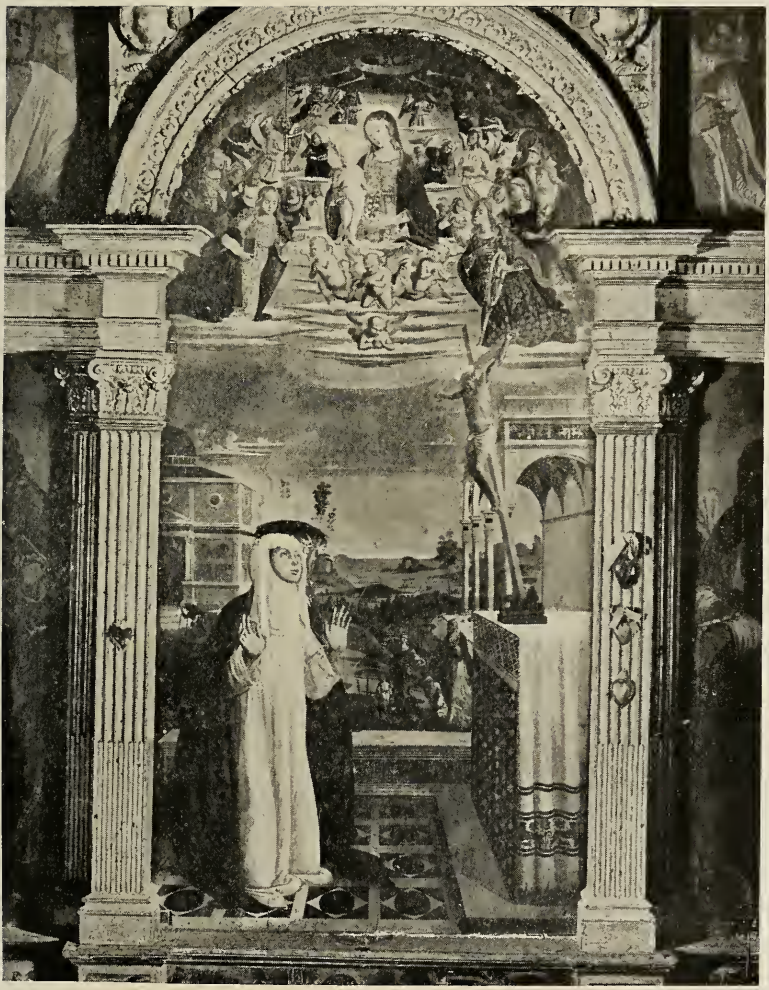
"O daughter mine," Catherine wrote to her, "thou hast begun to put thy hand to the plough of virtue, leaving the parbreak of mortal sin; it behoves thee, then, to persevere, to receive the reward of thy labour, which thy soul endures, choosing to bridle its youth, that it may not run to be a member of the devil. Ah me, my daughter! And hast thou not reflection that thou wast once a member of the devil, sleeping in the filth of impurity and that God by His mercy drew thee from that great misery in which thou wast, thy soul and thy body? It does not befit thee, then, to be ungrateful nor forgetful, for evil would befall thee, and the devil would come back with seven companions stronger than at first. Then thou shalt show the grace thou hast received by being grateful and mindful, when thou shalt be strong in battles with the devil, the world and thy flesh, which vexes thee; thou must be persevering in virtue. Cling, my daughter, if thou wouldst escape such vexations to the Tree of the most holy Cross, in bodily abstinence, in vigil and in prayer, bathing thee by holy desire in the blood of Christ crucified. So thou shalt attain the life of grace, and do the will of God and fulfil my desire, which longs to have thee a true servant of Christ crucified. I beg you

therefore not to be a child any longer, and to choose for Bridegroom Christ crucified, who has bought thee with His Blood. If thou yet wishest the life of the world, it befits thee to wait long enough so that the way can be found of giving it to thee in a way that shall be for the honour of God and for thy good. Be subject and obedient till death, and do not contradict the will of Catarina and Giovanna, who I know will never counsel thee or tell thee anything that is not for the honour of God and the salvation of thy soul and body. If thou dost not behave so, thou wilt displease me very much, and do thyself little good. I hope in the goodness of God that thou wilt so act that He will be honoured, and thou shalt have thy reward and give me great consolation."

This letter was written after the Pisan visit was concluded, but nevertheless belongs to the time when Catherine was full of distress for a world perishing in iniquities and "the irreverence shown to the sweet Bride of Christ." It was a time of persecution too, when servants of God, perplexed by the iniquities of life and contempts of the blood in the holders of the keys of the blood, had to hide in the caves of knowledge of themselves and of God. But it was still the time for which Catherine had the vision of the remedy of the Pope's return to Italy, and the declaring of a Crusade.

A vision of another kind had come to Catherine while she was yet in Pisa—a useless and morbid vision in itself, but one that has to be considered in a study of Catherine as a saint, if only for the reason that so much has been made of it in sacred

art and sacred biography. In the Church of Santa Christina, upon a day at the usual time of her ecstasies, after receiving the Holy Communion, Catherine experienced the sensation—partly physical, partly mental and common to many of the religious hysterics of old—of receiving the *stigmata.* Prostrate before a lifelike image of the Saviour upon the Cross, His pierced side and nailed hands and feet being realistically presented, she passed into an ecstasy, during which her soul, "all ravished with the desire to go forth and meet its Creator," constrained her body to rise and kneel. Then, with outstretched arms and a countenance all on fire—for there were devoted ones watching who waited for her to recover her senses and give them some spiritual consolation—she saw from the holes of the "Blessed Wounds" five "bloody rays" directed towards the same parts of her own body, the ray from the right side of the Figure on the cross proceeding directly and coming to the side of Catherine's heart. She understood the mystery of this marvellous apparition. Was it not written and known that many other devout ones had received the Divine impressions? But she cried out: "Ah, Lord God, I beseech Thee let no sign of these holy marks appear outwardly to the eyes of men!" And, while she yet spoke, the rays of sanguine red were changed to beams of light, and it was even as she had prudently desired. No mark of the stigmata was ever seen on her in life, though, after her death and pious dismemberment, custodians of her severed hands and feet saw to it that her scruples were disregarded. The "faking" of relics to gratify the morbid faithful



ST. CATHERINE RECEIVING THE STIGMATA.

By Bernadino Fungai.

In the Church of St. Catherine, Siena.

has always been allowed by Rome as an encouragement for weaker brethren.

During the illness that followed upon Catherine's paroxysm in the Church of Santa Christina, Catherine felt pain in all five places where the light had smitten her, but particularly in her heart, and such physical depression is not to be wondered at, considering her general condition of body and the particular nerve state her vision betokened. Indeed she was so collapsed that it seemed to her that only by another miracle would she be able to rise from her bed again. Undoubtedly the vision appeared to Catherine as she described it. Her desire had long been great to be counted as worthy as the many other mystics of earlier times, who professed to have been allowed to bear in their own bodies tokens of the cruel sufferings of their Lord. Yet in Father Raymund's account of all the circumstances, it is seen that Catherine's own view of her experiences was a far more spiritual one than that of those who had seen her sudden fall before the altar "as though she had received a deadly wound," and who afterwards gathered round her bed "fearing lest they should lose her."

The ecstatic moment had come suddenly, but Catherine must often before have sought the vivid sensation so long considered a sign-manual of God's favour. Suddenly, too, had come the extraordinary reaction of the reasonable mind which was always a special characteristic of Catherine's trance experiences. She felt the inadvisability of the marks of the wounds of love remaining to make her a wonder-show, and to distract the thoughts of the simple and the sensa-

tion-loving from the virtues of the soul which are the only reliable indexes of God's indwelling in the human form. She feared lest any outward and visible sign left upon her person should be reverenced out of all proportion to the inward and spiritual grace it represented. Already she had been much tried in Pisa by the public sensation of a report of her performance of a miracle on an empty cask, which was supposed to have yielded wine for the cure—by outward application—of a headache from which she had suffered. It was always a trouble to her when followers handled spiritual experiences as if they had been physical occurrences. Even in regard to that miracle which, in the first days of weakness and physical desperation, she declared would have to be wrought if she were ever again to rise from the bed to which she had been carried after her ecstasy, she would not give those around her the satisfaction, if it should occur, of thinking she had worked it. Neither would she be the intercessor to the Father of Spirits for any satisfaction or comfort for her "family" that was not God's will for them, or that they neglected to seek for themselves. Some of that impatience which was an attribute of her natural character, seems to have been in her reply to Father Raymund, when he begged her to work the miracle of saving her own life. The reflection must have come that it was hard indeed to make even the really pious and truly virtuous understand how inconsiderable are finite incidents in the Life of Infinity; what a small matter was the living or dying of any individual—whether saint or sinner—in comparison with the great

matter of the fulfilment of God's law. The simple tale of Father Raymund, despite the imperceptions of the teller, is so full of the meaning of saintship in general, and so pregnant with the sufferings at this time of Catherine in particular, that it needs to be related as Mrs Drane, translating from the original, relates it for the Catholic reader.

"I assembled all her spiritual children, both men and women, and besought them with tears that they would unite in offering their prayers to God that He would spare our Mother and Mistress to us yet a little while, and not leave us orphans before we were confirmed and strengthened in the path of virtue. They all assented, and going to her dissolved in tears, they said, 'O Mother! we know well that your desire is to be with your dear Spouse and Lord, our Saviour Christ. But our earnest petition is that you would take pity on us, your poor children, and not leave us thus comfortless and without direction. . . . Wherefore we all beseech you with one voice to make your humble prayer to Him that he will vouchsafe to lend you yet a little time of life among us, for our further instruction in this holy order of life wherein you have begun to train us. . . .' Many such words we spoke to her, with great heaviness of heart, which we showed more by tears than by words. Then Catherine answered us, saying, 'It is now a long time, as you know, that I resigned my own will to God, so that I have no will of my own, nor do I wish or desire aught whether for myself or others save what is in accordance with His most blessed will. . . . His will therefore be done in this as

in all things. Therefore I will not cease to pray, but only that His gracious will may be done, as may be for the best.'

"On hearing these words," Father Raymund continued, "we remained deeply afflicted, but God did not despise our prayers. On the following Sunday, having received Holy Communion, she again fell into ecstasy as before; but this time, instead of being left prostrate by it, she seemed on returning to herself to have regained fresh vigour. I told them all I trusted our prayers and tears had been accepted by God. But to be more certain, I asked her saying, 'Mother, does the pain in your side, feet and hands continue as before?' To which she replied, 'I think Our Lord has granted your prayers. For not only are these wounds no longer a torture to me, but they seem even to strengthen and fortify my body, so that what before weakened me now gives me comfort, and therefore I see that Our Lord at your entreaty has given me a longer time of affliction in this life, which I am glad of for the love I bear you.'"

Thus it was that Catherine reconciled herself to all the tormenting perplexities of her ecstasies and seizures! Since all that came to her in life—even the insidious temptings of the world and the flesh—came to her by the will of God, every feeling or sensation must be for her good so, although at times the benefit was hard to seek, she never stayed until she found it. Every pang was for her a messenger from God Almighty and with the Angel of Pain as with all ministrants of wisdom, virtue and charity, Catherine cried as she wrestled "I will not let thee go except Thou bless me."

She rose up from this affliction as she had risen from others and would rise from many more, blessed indeed and "strengthened with might in the inner man." And much she needed strength and blessing. The tearing forces of her epilepsy were never to be overcome. Her attacks were to become only more and more frequent for the remaining five years of her life. Yet during these years her most arduous tasks of politics and piety were to be accomplished. She was to lead a life of activity and devotion which in its sharp contrasts, its diverse interests and its many hindrances, was a very epitome of the life and fate of many women who to tasks of household economy, social service and nurture of the weak, which are the natural duties of the females of the human race, add enthusiasm for some artistic or literary pursuit, for some betterment of a political situation or for some supremely pious devotion. Catherine was woman in essence and in expression because to do what she had to do, and what she elected to do, she had to contend against the special physical weaknesses of her sex and the peculiar complaints from which she, as an individual, suffered.

CHAPTER XIII

It was while Catherine was still at Pisa that the cry "Fling off the yoke of the foreigner, the time is come. Every man who takes up arms against the Church is the friend and ally of Florence" was answered by the open revolt of many cities that had only wavered in their loyalty to the absent Pontiff, when Catherine had left Siena. The "family" of the Saint was most saddened by the defection of Perugia. Father Raymund had first news of it and he went at once to Catherine, with a heart drenched in grief and tears in his eyes, to announce to her the sad event. At first Catherine mingled her sorrows with her children's, deploring the loss of souls and the great scandals that afflicted the Church, but after a little—perceiving their dejection—she said: "Be not in haste to shed tears; you will have worse things to excite your lamentations; what you now mourn is mere *milk and honey* to what will follow. . . . Now it is the laity who behave thus; but ere long you will find that the clergy will also render themselves guilty."

And when Raymund in great astonishment exclaimed: "How!—will the clergy also rebel against the Soverign Pontiff?"—the Saint told him: "When the Holy Father will attempt to reform their morals, the clergy will offer the spectacle of a grievous scandal to the whole Church; they will ravage and divide it as though they were heretics." "What, mother, will a new

heresy arise?" asked Raymund, and Catherine answered: "It will not be an actual heresy, but it will divide the Church with all Christendom; hence arm yourself with patience, for you will be obliged to witness this misfortune."

These words of Catherine reveal not only the extraordinary prescience which she had in common with all close, feminine observers of the actions of their fellow-men and fellow-women, but they betray also the limitations of her genius and of her comprehension. All people who dared to attack the privileges and immunities of the Catholic priesthood were for her, inevitably, "lost souls." At the same time, as we have seen, she was most miserably aware not only of the low morality of the clergy, but of their pride and cupidity and their determination to resist all interference with their shameful pleasures and to fight to the last, by fair means and by foul, for their property and position. Such priests as these, Catherine herself denounced with all the fine frenzy of the prophet-soul within her and she yearned most ardently to see a reform of their morals and manners, even though such a reform should bring about the shocking insurrection she predicted.

Catherine's zeal for the reform of the lives of the shepherds of Christ's flock and her vehemence in pressing his duty in this respect, on the timid but well-meaning holder of the "Keys of the Blood," have led some writers—notably Mrs Josephine Butler—to propound the theory that if the Saint had lived in a later century, she would have been a Protestant. But if by Protestant is meant a scorner of authority and tradition and a zealot

for the dismemberment and disintegration of the body catholic, it is a mistake to suppose that Catherine of Siena could ever have become one. In view of some of her letters it is permissible to believe that she might, at a subsequent period, have come to see that allowance of marriage to priests would be a surer way of repressing immorality among the clergy than the revival of a severer discipline. We may also believe that she would never have been of those who consider a religious foundation to be possessed of a charter of irresponsibility to the community at large. Nevertheless, if the true Protestant spirit had been in Catherine, it would have betrayed itself at this time in a different kind of sympathy from that she showed towards the towns and governments who dared to throw down to the oppressive ecclesiastical rule a gauntlet of popular defiance. As it was, Catherine's censures on any lay dissent from papal propositions, were almost as vehement as those she hurled at unworthy priests. At the same time, her sense of the justice of the cause of the commonwealths, and of the injustice, the immorality and the cruelty of the pontifical rule—or at least of the rule of the Pope's legates and deputies with its many encroachments on liberty, decency and means of livelihood—was keen enough to make her urge the Father of Christendom to plant in the garden of Holy Church "fragrant flowers, priests and rulers who are true servants of Jesus Christ, and care for nothing but the honour of God and the salvation of souls, and are fathers of the poor." And she further commented: "Alas, what confusion is this to see those who ought to be a mirror of voluntary

poverty, meek as lambs, distributing the possessions of Holy Church to the poor; and they appear in such luxury, and state and pomp and worldly vanity, more than if they had turned them to the world a thousand times! Nay, many seculars put them to shame who live a good and holy life. But it seems that the Highest and Eternal Goodness is having that done by force which is not done by love; it seems that He is permitting dignities and luxuries to be taken away from His Bride, as if He would show that Holy Church should return to her first condition, poor, humble and meek as she was in that holy time when men took note of nothing but the honour of God and the salvation of souls, caring for spiritual things and not for temporal. For ever since she has aimed more at temporal than at spiritual, things have gone from bad to worse."

But for her the solution of all religious and political problems lay in the exercise of a tenderer counsel and a firmer authority by a divinely appointed Lord of Life and Destiny and by a return in all matters of doctrine and practice to the simpler faith and purer doings of an earlier and a comparatively pristine period in the history of the Roman Church. Her counsel to Gregory XI. was ever the counsel to recall the spirit and exercise the method of Gregory VII., surnamed the Great.

Catherine was impressionable—a woman who is not is either a mechanism or a monster—it is impossible therefore to say exactly what, in a quite different environment and under quite other conditions, her views would or would not have been. But the spirit of Catholicism is eternal, even as is

the spirit of Protestantism, and a summary transporting through time would not render the Catholic-minded of one age and country anything but Catholic-minded in another time and place. Catherine's mind was essentially of the Catholic type, using the word Catholic in its highest if not also in its fullest sense.

It is true that her passion for unity, which was not debased by any care for uniformity, and her desire for the extension of Christian charity to cover the whole earth and bring all nations and men under one banner—even the Gonfalon of Holy Cross—were a passion and a desire shared by many Protestants of later times, as by many poets and prophets of earlier periods. Dante had dreamed of a united Italy protected and upheld by Imperial force—his vision was of a revival of a Holy Roman Empire in fact if not in name. Catherine's ideal, and it was Petrarch's too, was also of a united Italy and a restored Empire of Rome, but her hope flew faster and took wing from a point in the history of the nations and the Church fifty years later than the poetic Florentine's. Her mind dwelt on a picture of the peoples of the earth ranged up as loving, obedient children of a Holy Father to whom the Most High had once and for all time bequeathed the keys of all mysteries and knowledge, even those keys of the secret of His Blood shed for the cleansing of the nations and for the reconciliation of every man with his neighbour and every soul with his God. We must never think of Catherine as of a woman in advance of her times, although she is one in whom the womanhood of all time is nobly represented. Far

from being in advance, she was in truth more bound by her respect for tradition and her instinct of veneration, to mediæval views and doctrines than could have been all her co-temporaries among women; especially among the women of the towns in which the shout of "Liberty!" was going up and in which the Pope for his un-Christ-like Christianity was being proclaimed from mouth to mouth of the population, a "heretic" and a "Patarin." For over all these movements and resistances, Catherine only lamented. Too sincere and too perceptive not to see the evils of which the cities justly complained and not to recognise the need in the ecclesiastics, as men, of very different ways and morals, Catherine had but one injunction for the people—"Obey." The lower clergy might be criticised—how often had not she herself criticised them? But for the highest—for him who sat in Peter's chair—there could not be rendered anything but obedience and the profoundest respect. No modern Catholic, defending authority, shows more ingenuity than did Catherine in drawing fine lines of distinction between a man and his office; allowing Urban or Innocent or Gregory to have faults, to be blameable, to make mistakes, although the Pope as Pope could never sin, never fall short, never be anything but infallible. Believing that her King in Heaven had left behind him on earth a monarchy with a visible head, even that Padre, who for all faithful was a dear, sweet "Babbo" (Daddy), Catherine could do no less than make distinctions. Such distinctions have to be made in justification of the authority of every human officer in every social office. But the need for

them is greater in respect of officers for whom inordinate claims of respect are made. Yet it was less to excuse authority than to disclaim profligacy, avarice and pride that she drew her distinctions. In the heart of her, she could not reverence anything that savoured of the foul or was less than righteous in intention and design. Yet she had to explain to herself and others—and she was neither the first nor the last upon whom the task has devolved—why "Christ on Earth" must be obeyed even when he is far from doing the will or imitating the example of Christ in Heaven. Catherine was no *Popolana* in the sense of having confidence in the popular will. And this was not only because she knew the human heart so well, and saw the faults of the laity even as she had sense of the misdoings of "religious," but also because, in her view, authority was indispensable and came only from above. Her interpretations of the Scriptures were, on the whole, of a deeply spiritual character. To many passages, generally read in an actual sense, she put meanings as esoteric as any modern-time Theosophist evolves and as mystic as any mediæval "doctor" ever conceived, yet she accepted literally Christ's words to Peter about the Keys and held that "no one can reach eternal life if he be not obedient, for the door was unlocked by the Key of obedience, which had been fastened by the disobedience of Adam. "I [the Lord God] then," so the passage in the "Dialogue" runs on, "being constrained by My infinite goodness, since I saw that man, whom I so much loved, did not return to Me, his End, took the Keys of obedience and placed them in the

hands of My sweet and amorous Word—the Truth —and He becoming the Porter of that door, opened it, and no one can enter except by means of that door and that Porter. Wherefore He said in the Holy Gospel, that 'no one could come to Me, the Father, if not by Him.' When he returned to Me, rising to Heaven from the conversation of men at the Ascension, He left you this sweet Key of obedience; for as thou knowest, *He left His vicar, the Christ on earth, whom you are all obliged to obey until death, and whoever is outside His obedience is in a state of damnation. . . .* "[1]

On the other hand she derived from words of comparative simplicity like "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there I will be in the midst of them," a doctrine of Christ's sanctification of the three powers of the soul—memory, intelligence and love—that is, to say the least, highly ingenious. It is true that the meaning was somewhat confused for her by the transcript of the Scripture that was familiar to her. It ran: "If there be two or three, *or more* gathered together." And she had to find a significance for the "more" as well as the "two or three." This is how she did it:

"Why is it said, 'two or three or more'? Because there are not two without three, nor three without two, neither three nor two without more. The number one is excluded, for, unless a man has a companion, I cannot be in the midst; this is no indifferent trifle, for he who is wrapped up in self-love is solitary. . . . Thou knowest that the commandments of the Law are completely contained in two, and if these two are not observed,

[1] My italics.—J.D.R.

the Law is not observed. The two commandments are to love Me above everything" (it is of course God who speaks) "and thy neighbour as thyself, which two are the beginning, the middle and the end of the Law. These two cannot be gathered together in My name without three, that is without the congregation of the powers of the soul, the memory, the intellect and the will, the memory to retain the remembrance of My benefits and My goodness, the intellect to gaze into the ineffable love, which I have shown them by means of My only-begotten Son whom I have placed as the object of the vision of your intellect, so that, in him you behold the fire of My charity, and the will to love and desire Me who am your End. When these virtues and powers of the soul are congregated together in My name, I am in the midst of them by grace, and a man, who is full of My love and that of his neighbour, suddenly finds himself the companion of many and royal virtues."

Catherine lived at the dawning time of the Renascence. In England a "morning star" of reformation was shining. In her own country, the Bible was at this time first translated from the Vulgate into the vernacular and Professor Edmund Gardner has said recently that it is not correct to call any Italian literature mediæval and that the *trecento* spiritual literature of Italy culminated in the works of Catherine of Siena. We cannot therefore say of Catherine's art and faith that they were purely mediæval. Her doctrines, arguments and interpretations, as her activities, morals and manners, were all too philosophic, too free, too lucid, too generous, too tender to be characteristic

of dark ages, although some shadows of black times fell on them. Yet she was no iconoclast. The images that had embodied a religious idea, the practices that had possessed the saving grace of ideality, were all venerable to Catherine as parts of the established order of a religious system, committed once and for all time to the guidance of a hierarchy and a pontiff whose seats none might overthrow. Her belief and practices were, however, of the middle times of Christian and social development in the sense that they belonged only to the dispensation of the Son. Her theology was determined in the words: "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me," and her idea of the destiny of society was limited to a view of all the nations of the earth gathered as children of one family by the knee of a bishop of the Church who by divine ordinance was constituted lieutenant of God, supreme in all jurisdiction upon earth during the "little while" of the absence in the skies of the Captain of humanity's salvation.

In the language of science, the universe of God may be said to consist of Matter and Power. And a man of science[1] has asked: "Given Matter and Power as the raw materials of the universe, is the interaction of Power, under its two forms of a *Combining Force* and a *Separating Energy*, sufficient to account for the totality of non-living and living contents of the universe?"

Science seems to answer this question in the affirmative and Religion has no cause to gainsay the dictum.

Certainly the deity of a "combining force"

[1] Mr Edward Clodd.

uniting all men in the life of Jesus Christ, "His Son," was the Deity adored by Catherine. But the Holy Spirit, blowing where He listeth so that men cannot tell whence He comes or whither goes, but perceives Him only as a "separating energy," Catherine could not worship, since she had not apprehended in any sufficient manner His office or His power. It is true she gave place in the religious life for reason, observation and experience and that, in withdrawing the support of her own presence from disciples, she exhorted them to draw nigh to God, without any intermediary, but she did not see that the following of the light of reason, as the doing away with intermediaries between God and man, justifies all heresies that are sincere and gives to individual tenets, conscientiously held, equal rank with Catholic dogma.

Yet the first wafting touches of that Spirit of Truth and Freedom always in the world to freshen and to purify it, but not, in the Christian era, sending forth its healthful disturbances with force, until the time of Renascence and Reformation, did not pass Catherine by. If its breath had never warmed her, she had never delighted as she did in the Order of St Dominic, which she specially esteemed because its foundation-virtue (in the phraseology of her day, its "spouse") was learning; and she had never dwelt so much in her writings on the function of the eye of the intellect in all spiritual perceptions. She certainly took very reasonable views, within the prescribed range of her experience and imagination, and believed that for true understanding, knowledge must pre-

cede love. Yet her conception of science was that of St Thomas Aquinas, whose saying that "his learning had come to him rather by means of prayer, elevation of mind and a Divine Light infused into his intellect, than by human study" is quoted with approval in her "Dialogue."

In the things of art and literature too, although she drew analogies from musical composition when writing of heavenly things, and illustrated doctrines with symbols drawn from the painter's craft, she seems to have had no ear for any message they contained in themselves. For the religious, she believed there was but one book. Only renegades from the sacred profession, or triflers with it, could want to read any writing but the Bible and letters and treatises grounded directly on the Bible. That she set so much store by the Holy Scriptures, and expounded them so freely and fearlessly, has been taken to reveal her essentially a Protestant, but it shows her rather fundamentally a Christian. The interpretations she put on the Scriptures, as well as the teachings she attributed to direct infusion of grace, do not indicate her as one gazing forward to the rout of all superstition by learning or to the lighting up of places of darkness by a diffusive spiritual illumination, that would break forth in regions without the visible Church, disclosing things of God in ecclesiastically unsanctioned quarters and spreading eventually, ray by ray, into the one indivisible light of the Truth which shall make all men free.

Catherine took only very seldom the forward view. More frequently, she looked back. The decay of the religious orders she did not attribute

to any weaknesses inherent in their constitutions. Neither did she regard the possibility of their having outlived their day of usefulness. For both Dominicans and Franciscans, she urged a return to their original form as well as to their original spirit, and extolled their obedience as obedience. The submission of the will of any one creature to that of any other she regarded as an act virtuous in itself. Taking as her text, Christ's holy obedience—obedience even unto His death on the Cross—she preached many a sermon on God's call to the faithful to be submissive in like manner, but she ignored the implicit Protestant idea of Christian obedience and advanced only the explicit Catholic one. She failed also to point out that the submission of the Saviour was to the law of God, not to the prescriptions of man. Obedience to the highest law one knows, fulfilment of one's plain duty and doing the will of God as revealed to us in the life of Jesus, in the teachings of science and history and in our own experience, is virtue for all time. The shifting of responsibility on to others, the excusing ourselves from crimes on the ground that they have been enjoined upon us by spiritual teachers, political leaders or by persons naturally set in authority over us, are forms of obedience that have no counterparts in the actions of our Great Exemplar. Yet Catherine, under the sway of her times and of the mediæval travesties of Christian doctrines which clouded then the horizon of the simpler faith that had been and the wider one to be, praised, without reference to the end gained, to the evil avoided or the good achieved, the mere act of

self-renunciation, the light feat of yielding the will to another's guidance. It may be that her own natural disinclination to submit to dictates that over-rode her own views, only made her more anxious to practise submission to directions that were distasteful to her. Certainly the one boast of her lifetime seems to have been that made upon her deathbed of having never failed in Holy Obedience. But there had been times—and therein the feminine temperament showed—when she had by arguments and persuasions prevailed upon her directors to alter their injunctions or, better still, had changed, under the permission of higher authorities, an immediate, uncongenial director for one whose views were more consonant to her own.

Yet we must differentiate between the instinctive faiths of the Mother in God and the imposed doctrines of the Catholic politician. As will be more closely shown in a later chapter, Catherine forsook in a degree her first love—"Sweet Primal Truth"—and coquetted with some sophistries she had done better to have ignored. But in her first—her true bridal—condition, she had apprehended, as naturally as that prototype of all Protestants, the woman of Samaria, that, "God is a spirit, and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth." One sign of this spirituality was that she never went upon pilgrimages nor recommended others to go. We certainly hear of her visiting the tomb of St Agnes, where the embalmed occupant recognised her kin saintship by the rather clumsy process of lifting a foot in salute, but she seems to have paid this devotion only because she happened to be near the resting-place of this saint of fame.

In the same way, she passed, when in Rome, to the various points about the city where the martyrs spilled their blood, but does not every twentieth-century tourist do the same, though not all, if any, of them with such a soul to be stirred by memorials of devotion, as dwelt in Catherine's breast. In regard to the Crusade also, Catherine was not fired by any special desire personally to tread the holy soil of Jerusalem. She disapproved of religious or other women making a virtue of following the crusading army and exposing themselves to the moral and physical risks of accompanying the troops upon a pretence that the goal of the expedition was a sacred one. It was not for the recovery of the earth that had once been consecrated by the footsteps of the Man, Christ Jesus, that Catherine urged a Crusade. Her desire, as has been shown, was the conversion of the infidel and the consolidation of Christendom. But for all the common-sense and the holy wish of her, she was so far from being a Protestant in spirit, or a Renascent in thought, that her only plan for the healing of the nations was a harking back to the methods of Mediævalism and a revival of the patriarchal and autocratic principles of twelfth-century papal rule. Perspicacious as she was in reading individual souls, she was blind to tendencies of the general mind. She could not understand that the Ark of the Lord might, for all righteous and human purposes, be sometimes in the camp of the laity or even in citadels of arts and sciences outside the pale of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. She missed the meaning of the words—although she did not miss the words themselves: "*Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go unto the*

Father," and: "*It is expedient for you that I go away, for, if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you. . . . Howbeit, when He the spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth,*" or, as the Revised Version has it, "*into all* THE *Truth.*"

Passionate, devoted Bride of Christ that she was, she interpreted this last phrase only in the personal and emotional sense. While admitting that it was the human race at large that the Saviour, by His life and death, had wedded, she could not have understood the expediency of the absence from any Christian's thought and mind of a bleeding, suffering mortal Jesus, the agonising Victim of the tragedy of the wrong exercise of man's free will. With sweetness and intelligence, Catherine wrote in one of her letters, "nails were not enough to hold God-and-Man nailed and fastened on the Cross, had love not held Him there." And this view into the secret of the sacred heart, by which she learned that the love of Christ was not rendered less than infinite, because of the finite nature of its expression, seeing that human conditions make it impossible for devotion to be manifested in any greater way than by laying down of life for a friend, reveals an apprehension in Catherine that has led students of her words and works to the belief that in days of greater enlightenment, Catherine would have held the more spiritual faith and the more advanced view. But the premise of all the religious belief and feeling in Catherine was dogma. God had done this, had not done that. Christ had commended this, had not commended that. The Church had provided for this, had not provided for that. She was far from the persuasion of Claude Bernard, quoted by

Mr Algar Thorold in his introduction to the translation of the "Dialogue," that "the day will come when the man of science, the philosopher and the poet will understand one another, or, as Mr Algar Thorold himself puts it, "when the philosopher, the scientist, the artist, the saint must all contribute" to a "really philosophical appreciation of our nature," and, be it added, to the genuinely scientific religion, and the truly living faith, which the "combining force" of the Christ life and the "separating energy" of "All the Truth," will confer as an ultimate dower of blessedness on the human race.

In consequence of these limitations to Catherine's perception and in consequence also of the antagonism of her nature to innovation and alteration, Catherine could never have been a Protestant inwardly and of conscious choice, though she might, in the problematic later time of Mrs Butler's naming, have outwardly worn the label of a denomination other than that of "Roman Catholic." Even so, she could never have been among the Protestants who are root-and-branch reformers, the blazers of new paths, the pilots to wider shores. Sufficiently Pantheistic to find "books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything"—all nature, flowers, trees, birds and seas, both surging and pacific, being faces and voice of God to her—she had neither enough of learning nor of tolerance of opinions adverse from her own, to understand that a great force of Freedom was generating in the very heart of Christian society—a force awakened by poet's dreams, fed by science and discovery and stimulated by abuses of authority, struggles for existence, and the perception that all were not Israelites who were of

Israel. "*I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.*"

Thus was the Saviour fain to address the disciples nearest to His person, and there are still those—passionate believers, zealous workers, and pure aspirants—who "cannot bear" the revelation of "All the Truth." And so they tell over and over again the fables of their childhood, those "earthly stories with heavenly meanings" that are at once trite and sentimental, precise and highly romantic. They will not face the mystery of facts. They are afraid to tread the winepress alone. Perhaps they are ill-equipped for such a task. If so, it is the valorous, because the discreet, course to live under authority, to accept no responsibility, to depend upon the direction of a "Superior" for every step they take.

The placing of Catherine essentially, as actually, more upon the Catholic than the Protestant side in thought and religion is not to be regarded as a disparagement of her intelligence and honesty; much less should it be reckoned that the Catholic instincts of her make her less typically a woman, or more particularly and locally an Italian and a Mediæval. Women are the natural conservators of human energy. To them, eternally, the personal and unitive in faith and practice appeal. Of instinct and of inclination, they worship the *combining force* in the Trinity—the power that gathers all men beneath the sheltering wings of love, that makes of every man and woman a neighbour, and that binds the soul to God with such ties of ecstasy and devotion as are best figured in the union of a bride with her bridegroom. The *separating energy* of

"the spirit of all the truth" finds its way more freely among the males of humankind. The love of woman is concentrated and trustful; the love of man diffusive and curious. Woman preserves, restores, forgives; man destroys, invents, judges. Both, of course, do many other things, commonly and exceptionally, initially and incidentally, and both omit to do, in special cases, some of the things that are generally done by all of their sex. But in the main and in the mean, women are the Catholics, men the Protestants of society. Catherine was a woman and a Catholic. Being these, it had been better if she had not meddled in politics. And this is not to advance any view of the needlessness of the conservative element in government. On the contrary, conservatism is a vital and essential force in legislation. But typical conservatism keeps women out of politics. Neither is it a thesis of this book to prove that women should not have votes. *Things being as they are*, it is perhaps quite "fair" that women should have them, provided they are gained as a right of womanhood, not wrested by a power that is demoniac. But are things as they are in modern life, the best that can be? The economic conditions of to-day are without parallel in the *trecento*. Catherine had the *trecento*, and an earlier, way of solving the problem of livelihood that confronts a single woman, brought up to marry, failing to marry and finding herself at twenty-five one of many sons and daughters wholly unprovided for. She believed that the embrace of Holy Poverty under the discipline of a religious order was the only wealth she had the right to seek or enjoy.

But the law of the Scriptures and of nature is

plain, although upholders of monastic life and monkish conditions fail to observe it: "If any man will not work, neither shall he eat." Everyone exists on the fruit of someone's labour. Those who neither earn their own living nor live on the result of a progenitor's toil or ability, must subsist of charity, if they subsist at all. Of Catherine herself, it cannot be said she was not a labourer worthy of her hire, but it must be remarked of the life of "holy poverty" she recommended, that it is, in the last analysis, an idle life and an extravagant one—one that society at large cannot afford to encourage. Modest as may be the needs of life of a single "religious," communities of these professional beggars become a drain upon any district they inhabit and a menace to the economic prosperity and internal peace of a country sheltering them. Yet Catherine's insistence on the necessity for happiness of the lessening by every man of his requirements, is a thing to be remembered in days when bodily and mental needs are manifold and all regarded as peremptory. Certain it is that, for happiness, life needs simplifying. And for happiness also, the truth should be remembered that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesses."

To attain happiness also, a woman must submit to the law of sacrifice to which Catherine so passionately conformed. It is often the greater gain to *go without* than to enjoy or to indulge. Yet the Incarnation is a fact that "vindicates the fulness of life,"[1] and we need not enter maimed into the Kingdom, if the whole body can be fitted for the

[1] Bishop Westcott.

spirit's indwelling. An assertion of Catherine that "God is not found at feasts, or balls, or games, or weddings, or places of recreation" is not true in a broad sense, although particularly and locally these words of the Saint to a flighty widow were without falsity and true in intent and in purpose.

But to come to Catherine as a politician. In saying that, as woman and Catholic, she had done better not to have meddled in public affairs, it is not suggested that she was fussy and incompetent, far less that she was insincere. And Italy had need of a practical application of the order, discipline and unity that are beloved of the Catholic mind. The point is that Catherine's genius was fettered and enmeshed by the political problems she tried to solve. Her character, her womanhood and her saintship all suffered from her plunge into the political arena. It was as "holy virgin," prophetess and "mother" that she achieved the measure of real success that was hers. Pitted in statecraft against those to whom the political game was a natural resource, if not a primary occupation; against the subtlety, the force, the unscrupulous self-interest and the more forcible ambitions of men, she became a tool—neglected or used according to the dilemma or the necessity of the occasion. Vowed to a mission—the restoration of the independence and the authority of the Roman See, the reformation of the discipline of the clergy, and the reconstitution of the papal court—and pledged to a Crusade—the suppression of militarism and lawlessness in Europe by the joining of the Western nations in a campaign against Eastern races, by the union of Christen-

dom against Islam—she did not enter into the wider social service with an open mind. As a servant of the commonweal, she was impeded by her preconceptions and prejudices as a daughter of "Holy Church." Nothing could be done, she believed, without assertion of the final authority of the Pope. She used such processes of law and instruments of conquest as came to her hand, not, in the first instance, for the promotion of the greatest good of the greatest number, but for the consolidation of that theocracy which she believed the Founder of Christianity had established upon earth as an arbitrary and perpetual government for the nations. And so Catherine fell from her higher office of discerner of spirits and mother of many souls and became a mere official of the party whose side in politics she took. That she was an official of rare ability and peculiar powers of persuasion, also one absolutely loyal and devoted to the principles she defended and the Chief she followed, does not justify her descent into officialism.

It may be said that it is not only the woman who sacrifices the fuller life, puts aside higher faiths and subjects liberty to a party or a cause, when she lays her hands on the political machine which—the mud of human affairs being what it is—cannot be kept immaculately clean and must in some sense prove a car of Juggernaut. That is true enough. It is true also that men themselves are not in general perfectly fashioned for the tasks of statesmanship they assume. The story of Catherine does not contain the moral that women are inherently unfit to govern and men necessarily fit. It shows simply that woman is faithful to her nature and her destiny

only when she remains a saint and a mother—the function of her maternity of spirit being to bring forth souls as the function of her maternity of flesh is to bring forth bodies. As ministrant at once to individuals and to nations, of material consolations and spiritual advices, she is ineffable. When she goes to the service of her kind in the spirit in which Catherine originally set forth, the spirit of doing the will of God, of binding up the broken-hearted, of proclaiming liberty to the captives of sin and of opening prisons of ignorance and habit in which men lie bound; when she keeps close to homely duty and the guidance of her capacities, her opportunities and her conscience, no matter how widely those duties open out, or what great occasions fall in her way, she is doing woman's part. And, even as she must consider no task of human service mean, derogatory or unclean, so she must not fear any duty as too high, too public or too responsible, should it appear before her clearly as the duty she is called to fulfil.

But her woman's part is abandoned, when she follows matters of political expediency by paths that lead away from the spiritual necessities of modesty, humility, truth, honour, justice and sincerity; when she surrenders the sovereignty of her sex and the simplicity of her faith and becomes a partisan, an adherent, the instrument of an organisation for the aggrandisement of a personage, a class, a sex or a community. She whose destiny it is to be Bride of Christ in Heaven, may not be the servile devotee of any "Christ on Earth." Yet because women are women and impressionable, even as Catherine was woman and most susceptible to all

impacts of idea and emotion, they are but too ready to become voluble and effusive advocates of theories, schemes, doctrines and causes that, whether novel and amorphous or antiquated and defined, draw them away from simple duty and loving service, fire them with a misdirected enthusiasm and make them termagant followers of self-appointed leaders to imaginary promised lands and shouting subjects of self-ordained kings and priests of human destiny.

By Catherine's own letters, as well as by observers' accounts of her times and the "holy maid's" part in them, we are informed of the spirit in which she took up the cross of political life and of the effect upon herself and her cause, of her designs and labours.

CHAPTER XIV

It was early in 1376 that matters come to a crisis in Florence. The "Eight of War"—chosen two from each of the four quarters of the city to conduct the struggle in which they were engaged with the Pope—showed themselves impatient even of negotiations with the Pontiff and determined to effect the revolt of Bologna before they discussed terms with Gregory. On his part, the Pontiff, persuaded by Catherine, had sent diplomatists to parley with, instead of warriors to attack his "children" in revolt. Catherine could not but feel that the Holy Father deserved more reverence than was shown to him. She was called to Florence by the Florentines themselves, though her going was sanctioned, even directed, by the Pope. Arriving there, she met with a reception as public and as pompous as that which had greeted her in Pisa. Nicholas Soderini —a former "Gonfalonier of Justice" and present "Prior of Arts" and chief magistrate of the republic and a friend of hers since her earlier visit to this chief of Tuscan cities—received her, with the "family who accompanied her, in his own house."

To Soderini, Catherine had written before starting for Florence:

"Can there be a greater misfortune than to lose God? We may form a powerful league, and be allied with many cities and great personages, but what good will that do us if we are not united with

God? What blindness! It is God who preserves all the cities in the world and I revolt against Him. Perhaps you say 'I do *not* revolt against God'; but I say what you do against His Vicar you do against Him. Since the Vicar of Christ has such power that he can open or shut gates of life eternal, what are we but dead members if we revolt against Him? Without Him we can do nothing. If you are against the Holy Church, how can you share in the Blood of Christ? For the Church is none other than Christ himself. Perhaps it seems to you that it is you who have received the injury, but how can those judge others who have themselves fallen into the same fault? I beg of you, Nicholas, do your utmost to be just. It is not for nothing that God has put it in your power to make peace; it is to save you and all Tuscany. War does not seem to me to be such a sweet thing that we need seek for it when it is in our power to avoid it. Try and discharge the office of the Angels who are ever seeking to make peace between us and God. Do your utmost whether it pleases or displeases men; think only of God's honour and your own salvation, and even if it cost your life, never hesitate to speak the truth, fearing neither men nor devils."

From this letter we learn that not all of the revolting Florentines, if any, intended disrespect to religion by their defiance of the Pope's legates and other deputies, and that Catherine's mission—consciously undertaken—was to bring them to the belief that "the Church is none other than Christ Himself." In view of the many divergences of feelings and interests between the Italian republics

and their absentee overlord and of the more than questionable conduct of the majority of ecclesiastics, prelates as well as priests, it was perhaps the best policy of the hour to insist that the Pope at Avignon, and he alone, had the power of opening and shutting the gates of Life Eternal. Only upon that view could the submission that Gregory required be made to him. But the view was hard doctrine to those who saw the immoralities and experienced the injustices of churchmen and Church rule. If, as Catherine stated, it was in the power of Nicholas Soderini to make peace, it would seem that he loved Tuscany and the Tuscans too kindly, and adored God too faithfully, to be at once converted to the tenet of the absolute identity of the visible Church with the invisible Christ, even though the tenet were propounded by one whom he respected as a woman and venerated as a saint.

Catherine wrote and spoke sharply enough to magistrates and citizens, declaring them to be "dead members" when in revolt against papal decrees, and refusing to be their intermediary for any negotiations with the Pope unless the "lords" of Florence—the "Eight of War," the "Prior of the Arts" and other Magistrates—wished her to offer them "like dead children" to their Father, for this way—the way of "all possible humility in deed and speech"—was the way in which they ought to enter to gain peace. But her words to the "Holy Father" himself were no less bold, and betray the natural sympathy with insurrectionaries of a daughter of a republic.

"Holiest and sweet 'Babbo' mine," she wrote, "I see no other way for us and no other help in

winning back your sheep which have left the fold of Holy Church in rebellion, not obedient or subject to you their Father. I pray you therefore on behalf of Christ crucified, and I will that you do me this grace, to overcome their malice with your benignity. Yours we are, father! I know and recognise that they all feel that they have done wrong; but although they have no excuse for their evil deeds, nevertheless it seemed to them that they could not do otherwise on account of the many sufferings and unjust and iniquitous things that they endured from bad shepherds and governors. For breathing the stench of the life of many rulers whom you know yourself to be incarnate demons, they fell into the worst of fears, so that they did like Pilate, who not to lose the government, killed Christ, so did they, for not to lose the state, they persecuted you. I ask you, then, father, to show them mercy. Do not have regard to the ignorance and pride of your sons; but with the food of love and of your benignity, inflicting such sweet discipline and benign reproof as shall please your Holiness, restore peace to us miserable children who have done wrong. I tell you sweet Christ on Earth, on behalf of Christ in Heaven, that if you do thus, without any strife or tempest, they will all come grieving for the wrong they have done and will put their heads in your bosom. Then you will rejoice and we shall rejoice, because by love you have restored the wandering sheep to the fold of Holy Church."

And again when she had already so far consented to present the petitions of the Florentines to the Pontiff as to send on to Avignon, as her advance envoys, her dear, trusted Father Raymund and

"other sons," she urged the Pontiff to use the instrument of his power and virtue, with zeal and hungry desire for the peace and honour of God.

It was even before Catherine left Siena for Florence that she had the dream which, in her own relation of it, reveals with wonderful distinctness the view she took of her political mission and the attitude of her mind when she first set out on it.

On April 1st of the year in which she went to Florence in May and to Avignon in June, Catherine saw the marvellous things of God in such wise that her soul did not seem to be in the body and the Saviour "explained and made clear"—as Catherine wrote afterwards to Father Raymund and those "other sons"—"the mystery of the persecution which Holy Church is now enduring and of her renewal and exultation, which shall be in time to come." The present crisis was permitted, she said, to restore the Church to her true condition. The Sweet Primal Truth quoted words which are in the Holy Gospel. "It must needs be that offences come into the world," and He added: "But woe to him by whom the offence cometh." As if He said: "I permit this time of persecution, to uproot the thorns with which My bride is wholly choked: but I do not permit the evil thoughts of men. Dost thou know what I do? I am doing as I did when I was in the world, when I made the scourge of cords, and drove out those who sold and bought in the Temple, not choosing that the House of God should be made a den of thieves. So I tell thee that I am doing now. For I have made a scourge out of human beings, and with that scourge I drive out the impure traffickers, greedy,

avaricious and swollen with pride, who buy and sell the gifts of the Holy Spirit." Yes ; He was driving them forth with the scourge of their fellow-beings —that is, by force of tribulation and persecutions He was putting an end to their disorderly and immodest living. But to continue Catherine's dream:—

"And the fire growing in me, I gazed and saw the Christian people and the infidel enter into the side of Christ crucified ; and I passed through the midst of them, by my loving and longing desire, and entered with them into Christ Sweet Jesus, accompanied by my father St Dominic, and John the Single with all my sons together. Then he placed the Cross on my shoulder, and the olive in my hand, almost as if I had asked for them, and said that thus I should bear them to the one and to the other people. And He said to me: 'Tell them I bring you tidings of great joy.' Then my soul became more full ; it was lost to itself among the true believers who feed upon the Divine Substance, by the uniting force and longing of love."

These were heartening words for Catherine's forerunners already meeting with discouragements at the court of Gregory. It was well that they, in their turn, should have a vision for the reinforcement of faith. This picture of Catherine their queen, the Cross on her shoulder and the olive in her hand, was the most inspiring image that could have been presented to them. But for us, the value of the picture does not lie in its efficacy for the strengthening of the wills and faiths of Catherine's "sons," but in its drawing of the woman upon whom was thrust the office of bearing the Cross and the olive "to the one and the other

people," that is of teaching Christians their duty and of bestowing on nations Christ's peace. Wise, loving and discerning as was she who drew the picture and was drawn in it, there are lines in the presentment that indicate a consequential spirit. The saint was not without conceit of her own singularity, even as she was not without belief in her own blessedness as an approved expounder of high religious principles and an acknowledged agent of important social interests. Yet had Catherine preserved that view of herself as bearer of the Cross and olive "to the one and to the other people," had she never lost sight of the rights of either party—Church or State—had she remained the Sybil, the Egeria, the Holy Virgin and the Bride of Christ, the discerning, counselling, inspiring and serving woman, she would have attained more nearly to that perfection of faith and charity which she ever desired so earnestly to reach. But for all her gentleness, purity, truth and devotion, she became a little too conscious of her exceptional powers, a little too impatient of contrary opinions, a little too anxious to force the pace of social development and to manipulate to an earthly advantage a spiritual situation. In other words, she exhibited in public life the faults of her femininity and became less of a "holy mother" as she grew to be more of a politician.

In Avignon perhaps she held still an inspired and natural office when she stood before the Pontiff and addressed in her sweet, penetrating tones the Court of Cardinals, denouncing the sins of their lives, of which she said, in answer to astonished inquiries as to her sources of information of their secret vices, that she had been more conscious even

before she left Siena than they who were daily committing them. She was altogether woman also when she wrote to Gregory: "Holy Father, I your miserable little daughter, Catherine, desire to see you immovable as a rock in your holy resolutions, so that you may be able to resist all the cunning artifices by which the enemy would prevent your return, and hinder all the good which he knows it would cause. Your Cardinals allege the example of Clement IV. who would undertake nothing without the advice of the Sacred College. It is true he often renounced what seemed to him to be best, in order to follow their advice. But alas! those who cite the example of Clement IV. are careful to say nothing at all about Urban V. who in things doubtful did, indeed, ask their advice, but in things which to him were as clear and evident as the duty of your return is to you, he followed his own judgment, and did not trouble himself about contrary opinions. It seems to me that the counsel of the good should always tend to the love of God, the salvation of souls and the reform of Holy Church, not to the love of self: and that such counsel should be listened to rather than that which proceeds from men who love only the honours and pleasures of this life. Oh, I beg of your Holiness, for the love of Jesus crucified, not to delay. Hasten and fear nothing; if God is with you, nothing will be against you. Hasten and you will restore the crimson bloom of life to the cheeks of your spouse, who is lying now in the pallor of death."

It was Catherine, herself, who planned the manner of his going. "Adopt a holy deception" had been her advice, "let it seem that you are going to delay

for a time and then do it swiftly and suddenly, for, the more quickly it is done, the sooner will you be freed from these torments and troubles. Once before they made you fall into their snares, when you delayed your coming, snares which the demon had spread in order that the loss and evil should result which has resulted. You, like a wise man, inspired by the Holy Spirit, will not fall into them again." And in another of those letters which the jealousy and enmity of the pontifical court seems to have made it necessary to be passed secretly from Catherine to her "Holy Father" even while she was in Avignon, she enjoined him to "come with confidence." "Up, manfully, Father!" she wrote, having prayed to be made aware of any impediment that might exist in the counsels of God. "For I tell you, you have no need to fear. If you did not do, what you are bound to do, you would have need to fear. You are bound to come: come then! Come sweetly, without any fear. And if any of your household strive to impede you, say to them boldly what Christ said to Peter, when through tenderness, he sought to draw him back from going to His passion: *Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me: for thou savourest not of the things that be of God, but those that be of men.*"

Catherine never allowed Gregory to forget his own "holy resolve" to return one day to Rome, that he had taken some time near about his succession to the Apostolic See. She knew of it, as she knew of the sins of the cardinals and prelates before she left Siena, by natural inference, if not by common report; she reminded him of it in the first of her letters addressed to him. It is an

instance, therefore, of the manner in which devotee biographers have added supernatural touches, at many points, to Catherine's natural history, that it has been related that Gregory was greatly startled once at Avignon by Catherine saying to him: "Who knows what ought to be done better than your Holiness, who has long since made a vow to return to Rome?" The Pontiff, it is represented, was under the impression that he had not spoken of this vow to living soul and believed in consequence that Catherine possessed a supernatural power of divination given to her directly by God.

Dante had sought by a dramatic picture of Rome as a widow in mourning, crying out for her absent Cæsar, to recall one pope to his duty of bringing the pontificate back to its ancestral home, and Petrarch had endeavoured to persuade more than one pontiff that heaven's alleluias would ring louder for such a return than for any other act a pope might do. But it was a woman (Birgitte of Sweden) who had prevailed upon Urban V. to begin the noble task, the deserting of which, so Petrarch said, had been allowed in order to prove the difficulty not of commencing but of persevering in a great work. Now it required the persuasions, the prescience and, it may be added, the craft of another woman to induce Gregory XI. finally to break with the French cardinals who desired, of course, to retain the Curia at Avignon, and with his relations —particularly his brothers and his old father who had ties and interests in the fortress-city on the Rhone that they could not form in the capital on the Tiber—and to set out at last, "swiftly like a gentle lamb" for Rome. He had taken the pre-

caution of sending on Breton troops, in his pay, to Italy, but this was not upon the advice of Catherine and he hoped no doubt that circumstances would not arise to make fighting necessary.

It was on 13th September 1376 that Gregory, with a few selected members of his court and household, set sail from Marseilles. He did not enter the Tiber until 15th or 17th January 1377. Tempestuous seas and winds, with delays consequent on much disembarking and re-embarking at intermediate ports, made the voyage almost unbelievably long. At Genoa, where he again met Catherine, who with her followers was returning to Siena by land, the Pontiff almost decided to turn back. But the Saint was there to point out to him the interested motives of the cardinals who counselled the abandonment of his intention and to fire him once more with a holy enthusiasm for the task he had long since set himself.

In the well-known picture by Niccolo Franchini of the entry of Gregory into Rome, Catherine is drawn marching gaily, almost dancing, before the white horse on which the Pope rode in the procession that gave pomp to his return to the tomb of St Peter and St Paul. She was not, however, present in the flesh, although her spirit brooded over the ceremony and it was in truth her hand that had conducted Gregory to his own place.

And she, who had done so much already, had yet other things to do. In Genoa, after the Pontiff's galleys had sailed away, first Neri di Landoccio and then Stephen Maconi fell ill and others of her party were laid low with sickness. Although the legends have it that she performed at

that time many instantaneous cures, they do not say that she healed all quickly and, in any case, the party was delayed so long by the various indispositions of its members that both the Saint's mother and Stephen's wrote complaining of the long absence from Siena of the mission which they did not seem to regard as of as much importance as their own comfort and peace of mind. Catherine had to pacify both women with letters.

To Lapa's peevishness she replied :

"Dearest Mother in Christ Sweet Jesus : Your poor unworthy daughter Catherine comforts you in the precious Blood of the Son of God. With desire have I desired to see you a true mother, not only of my body, but of my soul ; for I have reflected that if you were more the lover of my soul than of my body, all disordinate tenderness will die in you, and it will not be such a burden to you to long for my bodily presence ; but it will rather be a consolation to you, and you will wish, for the honour of God, to endure every burden for me, provided the honour of God be wrought. Working for the honour of God, I am not without the increase of grace and power in my soul. Yes, indeed, it is true that if you, sweetest mother, love my soul better than my body, you will be consoled and not disconsolate. I want you to learn from that sweet mother, Mary, who, for the honour of God and for our salvation, gave us her Son, dead upon the wood of the most holy Cross. And when Mary was left alone, after Christ had ascended into Heaven, she stayed with the holy disciples ; and although Mary and the disciples had great consolation together

and to separate was sorrow, nevertheless, for the glory and praise of her Son, for the good of the whole universal world, she consented and chose that they should go away. And she chose the burden of their departure rather than the consolation of their remaining, solely through the love that she had for the honour of God and for our salvation. Now I want you to learn from her, dearest mother. You know that it behoves me to follow the will of God; and I know that you wish me to follow it. His will was that I should go away, which going did not happen without mystery, nor without fruit of great value. It was His will that I should come, and not the will of man; and whoever might say the opposite, it is not the truth. And thus it will behove me to go on, following His footsteps, in what way and at what time shall please His inestimable goodness. You like a good sweet mother must be content and not disconsolate, enduring every burden for the honour of God and for your and my salvation. Remember that you did this for the sake of temporal goods, when your sons left you to gain temporal wealth; now, to gain eternal life, it seems to you such an affliction, that you say that you will go and run away if I do not reply to you soon. All this happens to you because you love better that part which I derived from you—that is your flesh, with which you clothed me—than what I have derived from God. Lift up, lift up your heart and mind a little to that sweet and holiest Cross where all affliction ceases; be willing to bear a little finite pain to escape the infinite pain that we merit for our sins. Now comfort you for the love of Christ crucified, and do not think that you are

abandoned either by God or by me. Yet shall you be comforted and receive full consolation; and the pain has not been so great that the joy shall not be greater. We shall come soon, by the mercy of God; and we should not have delayed our coming now, were it not for the obstacle we have in the serious illness of Neri."

So Catherine, though all unconsciously, drew for us a picture of an age-long situation! It is the situation in which a mother—poor mother!—finds it hard to understand that her girl-child is a woman and has a career—not matrimonial—to follow by paths that cannot be laid down for her by fond maternal care; and it is the situation in which a daughter has to plead with a parent for permission to leave the family roof-tree, albeit to gain an eternal benefit, although for the seeking of temporal wealth a son is not hindered but rather bidden to depart. In that situation, Catherine is seen as a daughter truly dutiful and not unkind. It may be noted here that it was Catherine, the seeker of spiritual riches, and not the sons who pursued material goods, who made a permanent home for their mother in her widowhood and age.

The letter sent to *Monna Giovanna Di Corrado Maconi*, Stephen's mother, is less direct and simple than that to *Monna Lapa*, and is perhaps stronger in rebuke and weaker in sympathy, but it has some beautiful passages and it reveals in its implications a mother more over-anxious for worldly advantage for her children than over-fond of their presence at her side.

"You ought to love neither yourself nor anything

else apart from God," she wrote, "for it is impossible that a man can serve two masters; if he serve the one, he does not give satisfaction to the other. And there is no one who can serve both God and the world, for they have no harmony with each other. The world seeks honour, rank, wealth, sons in high place, good birth, sensuous pleasure and indulgence, all rooted in perverted pride; but God seeks and wants exactly the opposite. He wants voluntary poverty, a humbled heart, disparagement of self and of every worldly joy and grace; that personal honour be not sought, but the honour of God and the salvation of one's neighbour. . . .

"And did you say to me, 'In what way should I live?' I answer you that children and everything else should be loved for love of Him who created them, and not for love of oneself or of the children; and that God should never be wronged for their sake or any other. That is do not love through regard for any utility, nor as your own thing, but as a thing lent to you: since whatever is given us in this life is given for use, as a loan, and is left to us so long only as pleases the Divine Goodness which gave it us. You should use everything then as a steward of Christ crucified, spending your temporal substance so far as is possible to you for the poor, who stand in the place of God; and so you ought to spend your children, nourishing them and educating them ever in the fear of God, and wishing that they should rather die than wrong their Creator. Oh, make a sacrifice of yourself and them to God! And if you see that God is calling them, offer no resistance to his sweet will;

but if they welcome it with one hand, do you reach out both like a true, loving mother, who loves their salvation; do not desire to shape their lives to suit yourself—for this would be a sign that you loved them apart from God—but with any state to which God calls them, with that be you content. For a mother who loves her children according to the wickedness of the world, says many a time: 'It pleases me well that my children should please God; they can serve him in the world as well as anywhere else.' But it happens often to these simple mothers, who want to plunge their children in the world, that later they possess those children neither in the world nor in God. And it is a just thing that they should be deprived of them, spirit and body, since such ignorance and pride reigns in them that they want to lay down law and rules to the Holy Spirit, who is calling them."

Although Catherine added to these exhortations: "I hope by the Goodness of God that all this will not apply to you," it is evident that she felt it did apply, and that many of her admonitions had the design of the clearing away of parental opposition from Stephen Maconi's path, as a "religious." The Saint had long since perceived that the volatile, yet frank and affectionate, nature of Stephen would never find rest except in a life of special devotion. She admitted part of her design in later phrases of this letter to his mother.

"And comfort you sweetly, and be patient, and do not grow disturbed because I have kept Stephen so long: for I have taken good care of him, for by love and tenderness, I have become one thing with him, therefore I have treated your things as if

they were my own. I think you have not taken this in bad part. I wish to do now whatever I can for him and for you, even to death. You, mother, bore him once; and I wish to bear him and you and all your family, in tears and sweats, by continual prayers and desire for your salvation."

Catherine had ever much to do, controlling, satisfying, rebuking and pleasing the various members of her ever-increasing "family" and their relations in many degrees. She did it all quietly, without apparent effort and incidentally to her more defined life-tasks, as every woman who follows a career without relinquishing all home life and friendly intercourse, has to do her household and social tasks, or come to grief in both her public and her private capacity.

BOOK IV

THE AGE OF FRUITS

"By their fruits ye shall know them."—St Matthew vii. 20.

CHAPTER XV

Catherine had thought and written of her return to Siena as a home-coming and had looked forward to entering again into the cell of a quieter and more regular life. But tasks of reconciliation awaited her in her native city that were to make her stay there a short one.

Successful as she had been in restoring the long-missed presence of the Pope to Rome, she had failed altogether in bringing the rebellious republics of Tuscany to the feet of their "Holy Father." Her own letters written from Avignon to Buonaccorso Di Lapo, one of the signory of Florence who was also a personal friend of hers, show how she had been treated by the rulers of the city who had professed to desire her services as their Minister-Plenipotentiary. Although the Pope had confided much to her, he had seen from the first, and told her so, that she was being deceived by the Florentines. Advantage was taken of her sex and of her faith in spoken words, for they had refused her written credentials, to gain time for the republic in its pursuance of the policy of defiance of ecclesiastical inhibitions. Things had gone from bad to worse during her absence and her own and the Holy Father's preoccupation

with the affairs of the Pontiff's return and with the stirring up of ardour for the Crusade, which, had it been organised along the lines of Catherine's hope, might indeed have consolidated the nations and made the Pope well-nigh invincible in power. But Catherine having become a woman of projects as well as a woman of affairs, was losing direct discernment, or at least could not now, if she had ever properly done so, apply her power of reading individual character and thought, to the natures and intentions of groups and communities of people. The true politician could not have failed to perceive that men's minds were not in general to be fired with enthusiasm for a Crusade. Kingdoms and republics were too jealous of one another, and too much concerned for their own independence and development, to have the leisure for a "holy war." The nations of Europe were in the crucible of changing mental and economic conditions, and it was less a question of which should obtain the most glory—whether the glory were of the spirit or of the flesh—than which should survive, which should establish itself on a sufficiently independent and scientific basis to resist ecclesiastical encroachments and to develop internal arts, industries and commerce. And so with individuals. Men were beginning to doubt, beginning to question, beginning to see through the pretensions of the papacy and to do, as Catherine herself enjoined them, without, as it would seem, seeing the consequences to priestly claims of her advice, to approach God without any "medium," and to pass into the "holy of holies" of their own thoughts and consciences, without the guidance of any other

creature. Catherine could bring back the person of the Pope to Rome, could re-establish an ancient court of temporalities and spiritualities peculiarly Italian in the Italian capital, could put the Pontiff in the way of attaining that independence of foreign control which could alone make his person and office a unifying influence in Italy, a centre and headpiece for the federation, in an empire of hearts and minds, of all the detached kingdoms and republics of the unhappy land that was the prey of the intelligence, vigour and individualism of its own inhabitants.

But Catherine could not undo all that the long absence and long misrule of the popes had done. The Father in exile—his face hidden from his children—had been a man to be criticised; a person and a symbol who perhaps could be done without.

However, he was back at last and though he had not literally complied with the prayer of Catherine that he should come with the cross in his hands, a meek lamb, the military show of his entry had been little more than a show. He had not fallen short in personal benignity. He was the same Gregory whom Catherine had blamed for pouring oil into wounds that had been better cauterised. For the wound of the rupture with Florence, he had not however used any salve. His interdict had gone forth before Catherine went to Avignon. He had forbidden to Florentines the Sacrament of the Altar and all Church services and, not content with excommunicating the city and the diocese in the ordinary way, he had struck at the Florentines in whatever part of Europe they might have business interests and negotiations;

had forbidden, under penalty of his anathema, their being supplied with the necessaries of life; declared them and their posterity to be infamous and incapable of filling any civil or religious offices and had authorised princes and all faithful to seize not only their goods but their persons, and to deliver them up as slaves. This sentence was only saved from being the horrible curse it was intended to be, by the facts that the papacy had itself fallen into considerable dishonour and that men generally were beginning to be too humane to carry out in all details so terrible a judgment. But the effect of the interdict was bad enough. Great disorders, among laity and clergy alike, were caused. The Bishop left Florence, but many priests yielding to the threats of the more truculent of the patriots or to the persuasions of those pious who were not also devotees of the papal idea, performed the ceremonies desired of, and paid for by the people. It was a time of lamentation and mourning. Florence—for the faithful—was a dead city indeed. But the spirit of reform that went before Luther was blowing through its streets, and there were many who not only defied the interdict but who propounded and embraced heretical views. In particular the *Fraticelli* added to their numbers. This body of poor brothers held that the Pope, the cardinals and the bishops, in separating themselves from evangelical poverty in the pursuit of riches and the enjoyments of their age, had forfeited all spiritual power.

Such insubordination and such opinionativeness were horrifying to Catherine, to whom at all times unity and continuity in form and discipline were

precious, and who particularly at this time, for political and for religious causes, was impassioned for the submission of all who professed and called themselves Christians, to the dominion of the Pontiff of Rome. Horrifying also to many timid, trusting souls in Florence was this turning of many under the tread of papal autocracy, and there were urgent prayers sent to Siena for the maid, but late returned from converse with Gregory, to come to the deliverance of the city.

These friends—converts and associates of hers during her earlier visit—had already devised a way of observing the interdict and yet satisfying their souls with some religious exercise and consolation. Lauds—*i.e.* vernacular hymns—some very ancient and some paraphrasing melodiously her own prose teachings, and written by her own disciples—were sung in processions round the city, and "at eventide" in the churches. Litanies and other prayers, not parts of the prohibited offices, were also chanted in this way. It is possible that it was Catherine herself, in Siena, who devised this middle course. In any case she was in constant correspondence with her followers in Florence, although she did not respond in the way they desired, to the deputation of Florentine magistrates who waited on her soon after her return from Avignon with the request that she would come once more to their disturbed city to aid in the making of peace. She consented only to send in her turn a deputation of a few of the men of her "family," headed by the one she deemed the most ingratiating, Stephen Maconi. Stephen's mission was not successful. The Pope's ideas of tribute, "tenths" and other

exactions, which were the terms of his peace, could not have been tempting to any Florentines. To the strong war party they were extremely offensive and irritating. The "be-Catherined fools of Siena," as the populace called Catherine's representatives, had to leave the city precipitately. All were in danger of mob violence. The eloquent Stephen very nearly lost his life. The people would not have the "Eight of War" wheedled into "surrendering the republic to the court of Rome."

But if Florence continued rebellious, and would have none of Catherine's intervention, the Sienese wished for the removal of the partial interdict laid upon their city as an ally of Florence, and desired also deliverance from the necessity of going to war with the stronger republic and restoration of fortresses that a few years previously had been seized in the name of the Church by the Pisan Knights of St John. For these things they were willing to make such a submission as the Pope desired and Catherine counselled. Hope was big in the Saint that the "Holy Father" would accept the submission and grant the prayers of the Sienese.

She had yet to learn that a papacy cannot generously surrender territory, and that the possession of temporal power of some kind, is a necessity of the Roman system of Church government.

"You know, Holy Father," she wrote, "that all reasonable creatures are more easily led by love and goodness than by any other means, and this is particularly true of us Italians in these parts. . . . The ambassadors of Siena are about to present themselves to your Holiness; there are no people in the world more easily won by kindness, and I

conjure you to make use of that bait to catch them. Be so indulgent as to listen to the excuses they will offer for their fault; they repent of it, but know not what to do. Be pleased then, Holy Father, to inform them what course they must take which will be most agreeable to you, without obliging them to go to war with those to whom they are bound. . . . I humbly ask your blessing, and would recommend to you the ambassadors of Siena."

But the ambassadors, although well received by Gregory, returned as they went. The discipline of Rome necessitated that whoso would be friends with the Pope must make war on his enemies, and the Florentines were yet in a camp over against the papal authority, and the Sienese under such obligations to the Florentines that they dared not, even had they so desired, proceed against the stronger city.

It was a gratification to Catherine on her deathbed to reflect that she had never failed in "Holy Obedience," and it is certain that all her definite, political journeyings were taken under direction. She had not been commanded to proceed to Florence upon the request of the deputation from that city, and seems to have had no inclination to thrust herself into the turmoil of parties there. Yet we may be sure it was not care for her own bodily safety that prevented a desire to go to the assistance of friends. Neither was it only, if at all, the too humble feeling that the persuasiveness of the bright young Stephen was greater than her own, that held her back. It would seem rather that she had looked upon the momentous enterprise of her journey to Avignon as a special and conclusive task

of which, although the ostensible object was making peace for Florence, the chief design on her part was the bringing home of the Pope. That great restitution being effected, she had felt that all the rest —removal of interdicts, repression of disorders, stopping of internecine war, reform of the Church and institution of a Crusade—would follow. Having unburdened her prophet-soul, and satisfied her mother-longing in the supreme accomplishment to which she had been destined, she wished to retire from the combat of public affairs and taste the sweetness of fulfilling once again her truer woman's work; of enjoying, as never before, the privileges of her saintship.

For these reasons we find her, immediately after her return from Siena, preparing for herself a private chapel in the Fullonica, where might be exercised the right bestowed on her in Avignon by a special brief, of having a portable altar in any house in which she might be residing and of communicating at the Mass there celebrated, without requiring leave of any person whatsoever. We find her also, more busily and more joyfully still, entering into possession of the ruined Castle of Belcaro, presented to her by a noble Sienese who had, in earlier days, been by her means reconciled with his enemies. Other friends came forward and helped her to transform the ancient place of fortress into a convent she desired to make a "real and true" retreat from the world and a "real and true" school of purity and goodness. Yet although designing—as it would seem—resting-places for herself and her disciples, and contemplating return to simpler, homelier ways of life than she had lately

THE CLOISTERS IN THE CASA DI S. CATERINA, SIENA.

Photograph: Mansell and Co.

trod in, Catherine never paused in her work of beneficence, and was still as far from indulging herself spiritually, as physically. The general disturbances had not been the means of reducing the numbers of private feuds which were always rife in Siena, and Catherine made several expeditions to and sojourns in noble and other mansions in the neighbourhood of her native town, for the purpose of making peace and restoring understandings. But as she went hither and thither, taking up the home tasks she had laid down for the unique mission of her life, her spirit was troubled by the news from the battlefield of politics. Gregory had been greatly disappointed by the effect of his presence in Rome. Although received respectfully, there had been no transports of popular joy, such as had greeted the return of Urban V. Possibly the Romans doubted whether the coming of this Pontiff, any more than that of the last, would prove to be more than a passing visit, and the attempts already made by the Florentines to draw them into the league of free cities, was making them sullen and bent on obtaining guarantees of their liberties. Violating the treaty, upon faith of which the Pope had resumed his ancient seat, the populace began at once to impose conditions on him, while the nobles, encouraged by Gregory's presence, tried to regain their ancient ascendancy, and secretly engaged Hawkwood to support their cause. The discovery of their plot while yet unripe, prevented a pitched battle in the Roman streets and the English bandits were soon required elsewhere. Cardinal Robert of Geneva having taken the bulk of the Breton troops introduced into Italy by

Gregory, to Cesena, the only considerable town in the Romagna now loyal to papal rule, allowed the mercenaries to take their pay in booty and ravages, and then found himself quite unable to check the excesses he had not authorised to the extent to which they were carried. The indignant inhabitants rose against these Cardinal's men and slew three hundred. Fearing that the movement would spread, the legate called Hawkwood and his bands to his aid and English and Bretons together massacred at least four thousand persons—men women, children, priests, monks and nuns—while an enormous number, some authorities say fifteen thousand, others eight thousand, fled wildly across the surrounding country, arriving in beggary and anguish in the neighbouring towns. Hawkwood had protested against the slaughter and vile outrages commanded by the Cardinal, and the English were less ruthless in carrying them out—for the most part contenting themselves with stealing—than the savage and frenzied Bretons proved themselves. By these, atrocities too horrible to be recited were committed. In the end, the name of Robert of Geneva was execrated from one end of Italy to the other and it was said openly that no faith could any longer be put in popes and cardinals; they had no concern with religion. Gregory himself was exonerated from intention of permitting such a crime, but it was seen that he did not disavow his representative, and fear was great that similar atrocities in other cities might be countenanced. The Florentines made fresh efforts to separate the Romans from their alliance with the Holy See, and appealed to the sympathy

and help of the powers of Europe. But the massacre had the effect of cooling down rather than warming up the zeal of possible allies of the confederated cities and the Pope, by making adroit concessions and granting privileges to this one and that, succeeded in calming the excited minds and disturbed spirits of the peninsula, sufficiently to make acceptable the proposal of holding a conference at Sargaza of the republics and principalities, with Bernabó Visconti, who had once declared that he alone was Pope within his own domains, as mediator between Florence and the papacy.

That Catherine's prayers and persuasions were of assistance in bringing about negotiations instead of recriminations, is not to be doubted, although it was the nature of Gregory to take always the quieter way. It cannot, of course, be believed that she approved the appointment of the outrageous Visconti as an arbitrator between Church and State, but, in any case, she was loyal to the Holy Father while begging him to grant peace and accept it in whatever way it could be had.

The name of Cesena is not mentioned in the following letter, or in any of her letters, but the horror of the massacre must have been in her mind when, ten weeks after it took place, she wrote to Gregory: "Have mercy upon so many souls and bodies that are perishing. O pastor and keeper of the cellar of the Blood of the Lamb, let not trouble nor shame nor the abuse that you might think to receive, nor servile fear draw you back, nor the perverse counsellors of the devil who counsel you to nought else save wars and misery. Consider what great evils are resulting from this wicked war,

and how great is the good that will be the result of the peace. Alas! *Babbo mio*, my soul is full of woe, for my iniquities are the cause of every ill. It seems that the devil has taken the lordship of the world, not by himself, for he can do nothing; but in as much as we have given him. On whatever side I turn, I see that each one has given him the keys of free-will by his perverse desires; laymen, religious and clergy are proudly pursuing delights and states and worldly riches, with much impurity and misery. But, above all other things that I see, the most abominable in the sight of God are the flowers that are planted in the mystical body of Holy Church—which should be flowers of sweet odour, and their life a mirror of virtue, hungry lovers of the honour of God and of the salvation of souls. They are befouled with every misery, lovers of themselves, uniting their own sins with those of the others, and especially in the persecution that is being dealt to the sweet Spouse of Christ and your Holiness. Alas! we have fallen under the sentence of death, and we have made war upon God. O *Babbo mio*, you are given us as the mediator to make this peace; and I do not see how it can be done, unless you carry the cross of holy desire. We are at war with God, and your rebellious children are at war with God and with your Holiness. God wills and demands of you that, according to your power, you should take the lordship from the hands of the demons. Set yourself to freeing Holy Church from the foul smell of her ministers; weed out these stinking flowers, and plant sweet-smelling flowers therein, virtuous men who fear God. Then I pray your Holiness to be

pleased to grant peace and to accept it, in whatever way it can be had, always without injury to the Church and your conscience. God would have you attend to souls and spiritual things more than to temporal."

Another letter, still more daring and emphatic, still more insistent on peace and on the fact that the wars going on were being caused as much by the shortcomings of the "faithful"—not excepting the Holy Father's, and more particularly her own—as by the revolts of the worldly, had followed the one first quoted. The sentences in it are startling—"with desire to see you a manly man, free from any fear of fleshly love towards yourself, or toward any creature related to you in the flesh; since I perceive in the sweet Presence of God that nothing so hinders your holy, good desire and so serves to hinder the honour of God and the exaltation and reform of Holy Church, as this. Therefore my soul desires with immeasurable love that God by His infinite mercy may take from you all passion and lukewarmness of heart, and re-form you another man, by forming in you anew a burning and ardent desire; for in no other way could you fulfil the will of God and the desire of His servants. . . . His will, father, is this, and thus demands of you. It demands that you execute justice on the abundance of many iniquities committed by those who are fed and pastured in the garden of Holy Church; declaring that brutes should not be fed with the food of men. Since He has given you authority and you have assumed it, you should use your virtue and power; *and if you are not willing to use it, it would be better for you to resign what you have*

assumed; more honour to God and more health to your soul, would it be.

"Another demand that His will makes is this: He wills that you make peace with all Tuscany, with which you are at strife; securing from all your wicked sons who have rebelled against you whatever is possible to secure without war—but punishing them as a father ought to punish a son who has wronged him. . . . Beware as you hold your life dear, that you commit no negligences in this, nor treat as jests the works of the Holy Spirit, which are demanded from you because you can do them. If you want justice, you can execute it. You can have peace, withdrawing from the perverse pomps and delights of the world, preserving only the honour of God and the due of Holy Church. Authority also you have to give peace to those who ask for it. Then, since you are not poor, but rich—you who bear in your hand the keys of Heaven, to whom you open, it is open, and to whom you shut, it is shut—if you do not do this, you would be rebuked by God. I, if I were in your place, should fear lest divine judgment came upon me."

No added phrases of "pardon my presumption" can make this letter anything less than what it has been called by a modern editor: "one of the most surprising epistles ever written by a devout and wholly faithful subject to her acknowledged head." In it, Catherine distinctly bade the Pope resign if he could not more faithfully fulfil his authoritative office. Had it not been the *authority* of the Pontiff, to make peace and deal justice, that Catherine laid so much stress upon, one might be persuaded by

this letter, if by no other of hers, to characterise her a Protestant. But another letter of this time—possibly preceding this—addressed to Nicholas of Osimo, the Secretary of the Pope, prevents any misconception of her standing, as it also feeds the regret that Catherine's faith in the Catholic vision of a Church Universal into which all nations and peoples may eventually be gathered, was so largely a faith also in the need of arbitrary government in that Church and so little a faith in the guidance of the Spirit that makes all followers free and that leads humanity into All the Truth. It is regrettable also that she clogged her plans of reform and repressed her instincts of liberty with that impediment to all reform and liberty, an autocrat by "divine right" whose control over belief and conduct was not to be questioned by the multitude. Yet one would not have had her faithless to the great Catholic ideal, nor less trustful that the reformation of a religious body may be from within. Only one would have wished her to see that, for a Church as well as for an individual Christian, appeal must lie from a "Christ on Earth" to Christ in Heaven and that the mistake of mistakes for any religious organisation is to think that its Head can be a visible human being. "The Kingdom of God is within you."

Besides asserting her Catholicism, Catherine's letter to Nicholas of Osimo shows the Saint to us occupied still and assiduously with spiritual business and, despite many disappointments and many failures in accomplishing her larger aims, renewed in zeal, faith and ardour, and determined to sacrifice all—even peace and quiet in her own mind—in

order to give honour to God with her labour and her labour unto her neighbour. She begins by urging him never to refuse toils laid on him in the mystical body of Holy Church because of ingratitude and ignorance formed among those who feed in that garden nor from weariness of seeing the affairs of the Church get into a disorderly state.

"For it often happens that when a man is spending all his efforts on something, and it does not come about in the way or to the end that he wants, his mind falls into weariness and sadness, as if he reflected and said: 'It is better for thee to give up this enterprise which thou hast begun and worked on so long, and it is not yet come to an end; and to seek peace and quiet in thy own mind.' Then the soul ought to reply boldly: '. . . I will not avoid or flee from labour, for I am not worthy of peace and quiet of mind. Nay I wish to remain in that state which I have chosen, and manfully to give honour to God with my labour, and my labour to my neighbour.' Yet sometimes the devil, to make our enterprise weary us, when we feel little peace of mind, will make a suggestion to the man, saying in his thought: 'I am doing more harm in this thing than I am deserving good. So I would gladly run away from it, not on account of the labour, but because I do not want to do harm.'"

So Catherine had tasted the bitterness of fearing lest her best efforts for good had done harm! But the brave soul of the woman pleads with this priest and with herself: "Oh, dearest father, do not yield either to yourself or the devil, nor believe him when he puts such thoughts into your heart and mind;

but embrace your labour with gladness and ardent desire, and without any servile fear.

"And do not be afraid to do wrong in this; for wrong is shown to us in a disordered and perverse will. For when the will is not settled in God, then one does wrong. The time of the soul is not lost because it may be deprived of consolations, and of saying its office and many psalms, and cannot say them at the right time or place, or with that peace of mind which it would itself wish. Nay it is occupied wholly for God. So it ought not to feel pain in its mind—especially when it is labouring and working for the Bride of Christ. For in whatever way or concerning whatever matter we are labouring for her, it is so deserving and gives such pleasure to God, that our intellect does not suffice to see or imagine it."

It is evident that Nicholas, the Pope's secretary, was a devout man to whom the continual claims of political correspondence were in some degree distracting and irksome. Catherine has to reconvince him as she has reconvinced herself that all work for Holy Church is work for God.

"I recall, dearest father, a servant of God," she told him and it requires no guessing to name the servant, "to whom it was shown how pleasing this service is to Him; I tell this that you may be encouraged to bear labours for Holy Church. This servant of God, as I understand, having one time among others an intense desire to shed her blood and her life and annihilate her very consciousness for Holy Church, the Bride of Christ, lifted the eye of her mind to know that she had no being in herself, and to know the goodness of God toward her

—that is, to see her God through love had given her being and all gifts and graces that follow from being. So, seeing and tasting such love and such depths of mercy, she saw not how she could respond to God except by love. But because she could be of no use to Him, she could not show her love; therefore she gave herself to considering whether she found anyone to love through Him, by whom she might show love. So she saw that God loved supremely His rational creatures, and she found the same love to all that was given to herself, for all are loved of God. This was the means she found (which showed whether she loved God or not) by which she could be of use. So then she rose ardently, full of charity to her neighbours. And when she had realised that it befitted her to respond by means of her neigbour, and thus to render Him love for love . . . she looked then to see in what garden and upon what table the neighbour might be enjoyed.

"Then Our Saviour showed her saying: 'Dearest daughter, it befits thee to eat in the garden of my Bride, upon the table of the most Holy Cross, giving thy suffering, and crucified desire, and vigils and prayers and every activity that thou canst without negligence. Know that thou canst not have desire for the salvation of souls without having it for Holy Church; for she is the universal body of all creatures who share the light of holy faith, who can have no life if they are not obedient to my Bride. Therefore thou oughtest to desire to see thy Christian neighbours, and the infidels and every rational creature, feeding in this garden, under the yoke of holy obedience, clothed in the

light of living faith and with good and holy works —for faith without works is dead. This is the common hunger and desire of that whole body. But now I say and will that thou grow yet more in hunger and desire, and hold thee ready to lay down thy life, if need be, in especial, in the mystical body of Holy Church, for the reform of My Bride. For when she is reformed the profit of the whole world will follow. How? Because through darkness and ignorance and self-love and impurities, and swollen pride, darkness and death are born in the souls of her subjects. So I summon thee and My other servants to labour in desire, in vigils, and prayer, and every other work, according to the skill which I give you; for I tell thee that the labour and service offered her are so pleasing to Me, that not only they shall be rewarded in My servants who have a sincere and holy intention, but also in the servants of the world, who often serve her through self-love, though also many a time through reverence for Holy Church. Wherefore I tell thee that there is no one who serves her reverently—so good I hold this service—who shall not be rewarded; and I tell thee that such shall not see eternal death. So, likewise, in those who wrong and serve ill and irreverently My Bride, I shall not let that wrong go unpunished, by one way or another.'

"Then, as she saw such greatness and generosity in the goodness of God, and perceived what ought to be done to please Him more, the flame of desire so increased that had it been possible for her to give her life for Holy Church a thousand times a day, and from now till the final judgment-day, it seemed to her that it would be less

than a drop of wine in the sea. And so it really is."

And so it really is. Yes, so it really is that a woman, fired by a great enthusiasm, persuaded by a Christian hope and having some concrete aim, some settled plan of reform, will rise up time and again after defeat and disappointment, to pursue that aim, to complete that plan. She does this by virtue of the Catholic spirit—that spirit which works ever for the ranging of mankind, in time as in eternity, in reality as in idea, in a corporate, organised, self-complete whole; in an army under one banner, in a society under one head. And she does so also by virtue of her womanhood that must be ever constructing, moulding and directing the characters and destinies as well as the bodies, habits and manners of mankind.

And so it really is.

CHAPTER XVI

EVEN as Catherine the politician had been the dupe of the Florentine *signori* in her journey to Avignon, she was now to become the dupe of the Pope of Rome in an expedition to Florence.

It seems clear that what was hoped for in Catherine's embassy, from her own virtue, devotion and repute, as from her winning ways and gracious speech, was not only conviction of the rebels of their rebelliousness and persuasion of the people of the papal care of them. The Saint was sent to Florence also that she might be the blind and shield of an unscrupulous policy, the cat's paw of a venturesome enterprise concocted by the wiser heads and more cunning minds of those priors and magistrates who wished to preserve their own skins—to say nothing of their goods and reputations—while they served the cause of orthodox religion and authoritative spiritual government. She was to be the agent also of the Father of Christendom, who desired to have his sovereignty outwardly recognised, his rule, with its exemptions and privileges, established over the minds and consciences of his fellow-beings.

At least two modern and erudite biographers of Catherine—one pledged to the defence of her as her own "seraphic mother," the other discriminating although sympathetic—seem to consider the Pope as well as Catherine to have been innocent of anterior intention of playing the political trick that resulted in an outburst of popular fury against

the Saint and her friends in Florence. But the very text which both writers quote, provides strong evidence that Gregory was not only aware of the design of Catherine's party for overcoming their opponents by the exercise of an ancient but questionable "right" of admonition which the Guelphs possessed over the Ghibellines, but that it was as a supporter of that design that the "Holy Father" sent his "poor little daughter" to Florence at this time. And what a time of flood it was in the tide of Catherine's emotional and intellectual powers, what a moment of renewed and almost desperate enthusiasm did Gregory have the fortune to seize on when, after much cogitation and some misgiving, he directed Father Raymund to draw up the necessary powers for the appointment of Catherine as his emissary and to bring them to the Vatican for his signature!

The good father had told the Pope that not only Catherine, but he—Raymund—and all and any of the Pope's adherents, were ready to obey his Holiness and, if need be, suffer martyrdom. But Raymund was not made of martyr-stuff, and although Gregory desired a peaceful missioner he wanted one of more unflinching ardour.

"I do not wish that *you* should go to Florence," he told Raymund, "because they would maltreat you; but for *her*, she is a woman, and they have a great veneration for her; I do not think she would incur any danger."

This commission was not one that Catherine had sought; neither had she desired it, although, as we have seen, she was once again more than ready to surrender peace and quiet in her own mind and to

"give her life for Holy Church a thousand times a day." Nevertheless, the letters of credit from the Pontiff must have been sweet to Catherine if only as tokens of Gregory's willingness to accept once more her services. She had been for some little time under the cloud of his displeasure and, because of this, had been sending him humble messages of apology through Father Raymund. But she had never offered to take back the words of her letters to the Holy Father himself, and when one reflects that her strictures on his conduct and supineness had culminated in the advice to him to lay down his pontificate if he could not perform its duties more faithfully, one is not surprised that the pompous, vacillating man was irritated and his dignity hurt by the woman's overwhelming enthusiasm for virtue and impatience to get things done. But Catherine was far from guessing that her outspoken judgment had been cause of offence, and continually said to Father Raymund that she knew not in what way she had displeased the sweet "Christ on Earth."

Now, however, she could believe herself forgiven and go upon her business without misgiving.

Arrived in Florence, Catherine's first act was to appear before the Signory and to make three speeches probably to the three different bodies of War, Arts and Justice. Her fervid yet gentle and reasonable oratory was instantly successful in gaining the promises of the authorities that the Interdict should be observed. There were few who denied to the Pope the right of inflicting "spiritual" punishment, even though his sentences of excommunication fell alike on innocent and

guilty and had the effect of suspending trade and bringing poverty and famine into cities. Resistance to the Interdict had been largely offered for the same reason that it was prescribed, to harass the enemy and make him feel his helplessness, and, be it added, to force Gregory to reduce the amount of the subsidy demanded even as Gregory sought by his fulminations to extort the full sum.

Delighted with her first success, Catherine wrote to her family in Siena that the dawn had broken and full day would follow soon. But night came instead. Meanwhile the Holy Maid, though suffering great bodily pain and weakness, was tireless in negotiation, now with Guelph and now with Ghibelline, and laboured assiduously to counteract the likely and actual consequences of the suppression of Church offices by assisting at and encouraging the lauds and processions. She contended too against the spread of heresy, which had been inevitably stimulated by the disruptions of orthodoxy, by preaching against the *Fraticelli.*

Yet all the while that Catherine was outwardly playing the parts—her natural parts—of prophetess and peacemaker, she was under the direction of Rome, and by the influence and introductions of Niccolo Soderini was attending the party meetings of the Guelphs, and declaring to them the righteousness of the policy of "admonition." And Catherine made these declarations with no uncertain voice. She stood before the captains of the Guelphs as a prophetess of the Vicar of Christ and as an orator of a political junto whose determination it now was to induce their party to abandon words and resort to deeds—to substitute for patient, legal and just

methods, processes that were peremptory, illegal and unjust. To Professor Gardner we are indebted for an admirable account of this affair, in his "Saint Catherine of Siena." He tells us Catherine declared it was "absolutely right to deprive of their offices those attempting to prolong the war, as such men were not rulers, but destroyers of the city." Professor Gardner translates for us also a passage of "external, contemporary [and, for once, hostile] evidence" that shows how very emphatically Catherine played a politician's part and threw herself into the religious and civil strife of parties.

"In this year," wrote a Florentine historian of the time, one Marchionne Stefani, "it happened that there was in Florence, a woman named Catherine, the daughter of Jacopo Benincasa, who, being held of most holy, pure, and good and chaste life, began to blame the opponents of the Church. Those who managed the party welcomed her right gladly; and among the others the chiefs in this affair were Niccolo Soderini who had made a room for her in his house, in which she had sometimes stayed, Stoldo di Messer Bindo Altaviti, and Pietro Canigiani; these were those who praised her to the skies. And it is true that she knew ecclesiastical matters, both by her natural talents and by what she had acquired, and she spoke and wrote very well. Pietro Canigiani, too, was having a habitation built for her up at the foot of San Giorgio" (it was in reality Soderini who built this house, although Canigiani and other friends contributed in the way described), "and was collecting money from all his faction, men and women, buying stone and wood and bringing it up there. Either maliciously by her own will, or in-

troduced by the instigation of these men, she was brought many times to the meetings of the Party, to declare that it was right to admonish, in order that they might take measures to stop the war. By those of the party, she was reputed a prophetess, and by others a hypocrite and a bad woman, and many things were said of her, by some for treachery, and by others because they thought to speak well by speaking evil of her." Mrs Drane maintains that Catherine hesitated to apply the remedy for those divisions among the Florentine political leaders which prevented—as Soderini believed—the now general desire for peace, from being effectuated; and she tells us that it was only the "obstinate stupidity" of one of the strongest of the "Eight of War" that at last necessitated measures more peremptory than those of appeals to religious principles, to time-honoured dogmas and to the normal human conscience, which were the Saint's usual weapons of conversion, even as they are the customary instruments of the natural mother, who persuades her "little ones" to righteous thoughts and ways. But the proofs of the researches of Professor Gardner are not to be gainsaid and in the light of Marchionne Stefani's account, and of after events in Florence, one cannot help feeling how much better it would have been if Catherine had never laid down her nature's arms of instruction and pleading, and taken up tools which, useful as they may be for the crafts of men, ill-serve a woman in the arts that do most honour to her.

But the Soderini and Canigiani families were behind her and, crouching low, yet ready for a spring on the liberties of states, the Pope of Rome who

had sent her to the turbulent city to reduce it, if she could, to the terms of his ultimatum, or to die, if she could not, a martyr to the Church, and by her act of death, perhaps, to help his cause more than by any deed of her life.

The admonitions began. At first only notorious obstructionists were by their process removed. But this method of getting rid of political rivals and opponents, to say nothing of private enemies, was one too grateful to the spite and brutality of men in the herd, not to be seized upon with a delight and an energy that soon became uncontrollable. Upon a mere suspicion of something that a man had or had not done, that bore a Ghibellinish aspect, Guelfs, and those that were only Guelfish—since no principle of devotion to Holy Church really swayed them—banished fellow-citizens and deprived them of their property. The whole business became soon a "great scandal." Catherine certainly was as horrified as any common citizen who looked on with wonder at the iniquities that could be done in the name of Government. But Catherine had not *foreseen.* Perhaps it was the uproar alone that brought to her any realisation of the heinousness of the policy she had been led into. It certainly seems to have been the "scandals" that troubled her and not the fact that many of the admonitions had been carried out without any ground of public policy. There were other discerning, thoughtful, dominating spirits, though not in any sense saintly ones, who surveyed the situation, but neither desired nor endeavoured to suppress the scandals. On the contrary, these turned them to their own ends, the ends of personal aggrandisement, social independence,

individual licence and general disorder. There were third parties and free-lances rising to fame and office, who did not want the reconciliations Catherine was pledged to effect. Occupationless, starving city-loafers as well as dissatisfied, half-employed tradesmen, and artisans who had true stakes in their city's welfare, and who felt the sharp pinch of suspended trade, were all too easily persuaded that the *beata popolana* was an agent of the Grandi and an enemy to the state she professed to serve. Just as the proscriptions of the Ghibellines by the Guelphs, had outstripped all calculations of their numbers and effect, so the indignation and vindictiveness of the multitude soon exceeded all that the agitators of the public mind had planned. The mob was up and out for the slaughter of Catherine and her friends!

The Saint had certainly made great efforts to arrest the headlong progress of the policy, she had been the first to apply, although she never saw her full responsibility in the matter. The difference of her intention from the designs of the malicious ones who followed her example in their own way, partly prevented her from seeing her fault in its full extent. But also because in this as in other political matters she was more or less the dupe of others more practically prescient than herself, was she blinded to the true aspect of her own act.

". . . Let us rejoice in endurance, not seeking our own glory, but the glory of God and the salvation of souls, as the glorious martyrs did, who for the sake of truth, made them ready for death and all torments, so that with their blood, shed for love of the blood, they built the walls of Holy Church,"

were words she wrote to Father Raymund when the outbreak had but just subsided.

Dangers to life and limb could not affright Catherine. A saint indeed, she was ever on the look-out for martyrdom, but womanlike she could not see that, had she then received the *coup de grace* she asked for at the hands of the populace, she would not have been truly a martyr for the cause of God. This was no time for Catherine's adornment with the red rose of suffering death for the Christ she loved and served. The fury roused against her had not been stirred by one of her very many truly virtuous acts. Not in pure faith nor in true womanly humility had she, although ecstatically, countenanced and advised the admonishing of the Ghibellines. She had done evil that good might come. From causes of her own impatience and of her own impressionability, and because she could not wait for God's full time, but allowed suggestions of those she honoured to leave on her mind impresses that stunned conscience while they waked imagination, she took to her aid a power which, though legal in the letter of man's law in the Florence of her time, was most illegal in the spirit of God's commands for all time.

And so do all women who strain to the utmost the permissions of their country's statutes or—as Catherine did at this time of political excitement—impudently court punishments and injuries in order that they may be accredited martyrs of the faith within them. Of such martyrs, the Lord God Omnipotent makes no use. Temporarily, they may bring a cause into prominence, but they retard rather than assist its true development. The blood

of those who seek for thrills, and who clamour to wear crowns awarded for importunity and not bestowed for virtue or won by toil, is a sterile fluid offered not in fruitful but in barren times of true womanly activity and which, falling to the ground, germinates no true life. It was the living martyrdom of Catherine as a woman of infinite devotion, love, pity and humility which made that seed for her Bridegroom's Church which, growing up and blossoming, has sent down the ages a fragrance of sweetness, purity and truth that can never die and that exercises for all time a sanctifying influence on the human race.

Although the fearlessness of the Saint in a moment of actual peril, and her consideration for others, had the effect of arresting the mob in its bloodthirsty progress, it was still felt that Catherine, the foreigner and pledged servant of the court of Rome, was no fit arbitrator of the cause of Florentine liberties. Her life was spared, but her inter-meddling could not be forgiven. There was no safety for her or for the house of friends of hers with whom she might find shelter, if she stayed in Florence. The most practical among her followers wished her to go back to Siena. But she had vowed not to leave the domain of Florence until a peace with the Pope should have been concluded.

Friends were found—it is generally supposed they were Francesco the tailor and Monna Agnese, his wife—who were willing to receive her secretly. With these good souls she remained in hiding while arrangements were made for her departure with her "family" to "a place of hermits," outside the city. So the little girl who had once played so delightedly

at being a "desert-father," was now, in very fact, driven forth into the wilderness. But again her sojourn in a cave did not last long. The city grew quieter and Soderini found himself unmolested—his banishment from Florence was to come—in the little house he had given to Catherine for her use, although his own family mansion had been pillaged and burned down during the riots. So Catherine returned to the city and found herself sufficiently free from attacks of criticism and insult for it to have been said by some that she was received with "shame and respect." However that may be, it is sure that even after the eventual coming of peace, and till the very end of Catherine's time in Florence, there were influential citizens and persons in authority, as well as idle babblers and inconsiderable *popolani*, who had no liking for her presence and were vehement against her figuring any more in public life.

Chastened by her bitter disappointment over God's refusal of her martyrdom, Catherine learned her duty of behaving quietly, although she still worked for the peace that was indeed an end to be devoutly laboured for by all good citizens, whether men or women, as well as by all faithful sons and daughters of Holy Church. And there was another reason for Catherine to forbear from taking a stand that provoked popular fury. She was in greatest fear lest the newly elected Pope in Rome—Urban VI.—should take fright at or be angered by the insurrection against Guelph power and papal influence. The people's usage of herself, the accredited representative in Florence of the court of Rome, might provoke the Pontiff to break off negotiations with the Florentines and to order her to leave Florence.

And peace was not yet made. Feeling that a mistake had been committed, that she and her party, as much as the misled populace, had been to blame, and that an uproar need not have been, since the people in general really desired cessation of hostilities, she was most anxious for as little as possible to be made of the tumult in all despatches to the Holy See and most desirous that the restored quiet should not be broken. We can see all the grades of this anxiety and many of the steps of her resolution not to offend again or let her own sentimentality get the better of her judgment—her vanity override her modesty—in her letters addressed at this time to the Pontiff, to friends in Siena, and to the Priors of the Arts and Gonfaloners of Justice in Florence.

The passages of these letters which follow, require no comment. Their language in the light of events is plain enough. One note alone need be made. Pope Gregory died in March and his death arrested preparations for the conference at Sarzana. The admonitions had begun before his decease, but the tumult did not occur till June. It was not therefore Catherine's action at this time that brought down the curses on her, on Birgitta —queen and saint—and on all visionary, insistent women who lead men into difficulties, which it is said that Gregory hurled forth on his death-bed.

The Saint had never disguised from Gregory her belief that dark ways and difficult paths would have to be trodden even in the city of the Pontiff—the place of the tombs of St Peter and St Paul. Nevertheless she had been the good angel of himself and Italy in presenting him with an opportunity of acting

a manly part and bringing back to the fatherless land of her birth the superior and priest who should never have deserted it. The methods by which she had accomplished this great work were those of which she had no need to be ashamed. They were the methods of a genuine womanhood, and of a true saint; even the methods of upholding unswervingly the great moral laws, of appealing with dignity to the sanctity of right principles, and of serving with absolute love, truth and devotion the cause of the Highest and Best she knows.

These are the passages of Catherine's letters the meaning of which is clear:

"So, dearest and sweetest father," she is writing to that most sympathetic Raymund, "let us divest and clothe us in truth, so we shall be faithful lovers. I tell you that to-day I will begin again, in order that my sins may not hold me back from such a good as it is to give one's life for Christ crucified. For I see that in the past, through my faults, this has been denied me. I had desired very much, with a new intensity, increased in me beyond all custom, to endure without fault for the honour of God and the salvation of souls and the reformation and good of Holy Church, so that my heart was melting from the love and desire I had to lay down my life. This desire was blessed and grievous; blessed it was for the union that I felt with truth, and grievous it was for the oppression which I felt from the wrong against God, and the multitude of demons who overshadowed all the city, dimming the eye of the mind in human beings. Almost it seemed that God was letting them have their way, through justice and divine discipline.

Therefore my life could not but dissolve in weeping, fearful for the great evil which seemed on the point of coming, and because peace was hindered for this reason. But in this great evil, God, who despises not the desire of His servants, and that sweet mother Mary, whose name was invoked with pained and dolorous and living desires, granted that in all the tumult and the great upheaval that occurred, we may almost say there were no human deaths, except those which justice inflicted. So the desire I had that God would show His providence and destroy the power of the demons that they might not do so much harm as they were ready to do, was fulfilled, but my desire to give my life for the Truth and the sweet Bride of Christ was not fulfilled. But the Eternal Bridegroom played a great joke on me. . . . So I have reason to weep, because the multitude of my iniquities was so great that I did not deserve that my blood should give life, or illumine darkened minds, or reconcile the sons with the father, or cement a stone in the mystical body of Holy Church. Nay it seemed that the hands of him who wanted to kill me were bound. My words, 'I am she. Take me, and let this family be,' were a sword that pierced straight through his heart. O Babbo mine, feel a wonderful joy in yourself, for I never experienced in myself such mysteries, with so great joy! There was the sweetness of truth in it, the gladness of a clean and pure conscience" (Catherine truly knew nothing against herself, yet was not thereby justified) "there was the fragrance of the sweet providence of God; there was the savour of the times of the new martyrs, foretold

as you know by the Eternal Truth. Tongue would not suffice to tell you how great the good is that my soul feels. I seem to be so bound to my Creator that if I gave my body to be burned I could not satisfy the great mercy which I and my cherished sons and daughters have received.

"All this I tell you that you may not conceive bitterness; but may feel an unspeakable delight, with softness, gladness; and that you and I may begin to sorrow over my imperfection, because so great a good was hindered by my sin. How blessed my soul would have been had I given my blood for the sweet Bride, and for love of the blood and the salvation of souls!"

And later to "Sons in Christ, while she was in Florence," the Saint wrote: "God has heard the cry of His servants, who for so long have cried aloud before His face, and the lamentable cry which they have raised so long over the sons who were dead. Now are they risen again—from death they have come to life, and from blindness to light. Dearest sons, the lame walk, and the deaf hear, the blind eye sees and the dumb speak, crying with a loud voice: 'Peace, peace, peace!' with great gladness—seeing themselves return as sons unto obedience and favour of their father, their minds being reconciled. As people who now begin to see, they say: 'Thanks be to Thee, Lord, who hast reconciled us with our Holy Father.' Now the Lamb of God, sweet Christ on earth, is called holy, while before he was called a heretic and a Patarin. Now they receive him for a father, where before they refused him. I do not wonder, for the cloud is

passed, and fair weather has come. Rejoice, rejoice, dearest sons, with very sweet weeping for thanksgiving, before the Highest Eternal Father, not calling yourselves content with this, but praying Him that soon may be raised the gonfalon of the most holy cross. Rejoice, exult, in Christ sweet Jesus; let our hearts break, seeing the largess of the infinite goodness of God. Now peace is made, despite him who would hinder it. Discomfited is the devil of hell.

"Saturday evening one olive came at one o'clock at night, and to-day at vespers came the other. . . . Drown you and bathe you in the Blood of Christ crucified. Love, love one another. I send you some of the olive of peace."

In contrast to this exultant missive, one reads, almost in stupefied wonder, her letter of farewell to Florence—so sad, so despondent and quite subversive of the theory that the Saint had returned to Florence from the "place of hermits" in anything like triumph. This letter shows too that if she had contributed to bring nearer Florence and the Papacy, she had done nothing to heal strife and faction among the Florentines themselves.

To the Priors and Gonfaloners then, she wrote:

"Let the sorrow that I feel at seeing your city (which I regard as mine) in such great trouble be my excuse. I did not expect to have to write to you; but I thought, by word of mouth and face to face, to say these things to you, for the honour of God and for your own utility. For my intention was to visit you, and to rejoice with you at the holy peace, for which peace I have laboured so long in all that I have been able, according to

my possibility and my small power; if I had been able to do more, I would have done it. After rejoicing with you and thanking the Divine Goodness and you, I would have departed and gone away to Siena. Now it seems that the demon has sowed so much unjustly in their hearts against me, that I have not wished to add sin to sin; for thereby would the ruin be only increased. I have gone away with the divine grace; and I pray the supreme Eternal Goodness to pacify and unite and bind your hearts together, one with the other, so in love of charity that neither demon nor creature can ever separate you. Whatever can be done by me for your welfare will I gladly do, even unto death, in spite of demons visible and invisible who would impede every holy desire. I go away consoled, inasmuch as that is accomplished in me which I set before my heart when I entered this city, never to depart, though I would have to die for it, until I saw you, the children, reconciled with your father, seeing such peril and loss in souls and bodies; I go away grieving and with sorrow, since I leave the city in such great bitterness. But may Eternal God, who has consoled me in the one, console me in the other matter, so that I may see and hear that you are pacified in a good and firm and perfect state, that you may be able to render glory and praise to His name, and not stand under arms with such great affliction. I hope that the sweet clemency of God will turn the eye of His mercy and fulfil the desire of His servants." [1]

[1] This letter was for the first time translated and published in Professor Gardner's book on Catherine, 1907.

CHAPTER XVII

When Catherine, in July or August 1378, returned with her family to Siena, there came a time of comparative rest. But it was not a period of idleness. According to all those disciples of hers who were also her secretaries and in some part her biographers, it was during these few months of leisure from public affairs that she dictated in *ecstasy* her great work, the "Dialogue," or as it was originally called "The Book of Divine Teaching."

"Sometimes," wrote Caffarini, the Dominican friar who had known Catherine in early days at her father's table where he "always saw her cheerful," and lived to memorialise, long after her death, some of her saddest, solemnest and most ecstatic moments. "Sometimes she held her hands clasped on her breast, sometimes she walked about the room or knelt down for a while, always, however, keeping her eyes turned towards heaven." And Stephen Maconi supplemented this account with the information that she wrote some portions of her great book with her own hand. Moreover he "freely confessed" to Caffarini that "out of love and devotion" he gathered up some of the sheets of her covering, and in order to preserve them in a safe place he deposited them in the Carthusian Monastery of Pontignano, two miles from Siena, which was the house of his order. But neither of these witnesses suggest that Catherine's own writing was of the kind called "automatic," so that

their testimony brings the method of her composition near to that ordinarily employed by genius. A condition of complete abstraction from all bodily senses is in no degree proved to have been a condition of her literary production, although Caffarini believed her to be "rapt in ecstasy" when she dictated the sheets of the "Dialogue" to her secretaries. Catherine's own account of the book's genesis is, as might be expected, simpler still. In a long letter written to her good Father Raymund in intervals of the great bodily torments that immediately preceded her death in Rome in April 1380, she requested him "to collect the Book, and every other writing of mine with which I have sometimes *occupied* [one translator has it *recreated*] myself, and which you . . . may find, and do with them whatever you think most for God's glory."

The wording of this sentence makes it possible to believe that it was the intention of the Saint to differentiate "the Book" from the other writings with which she had occasionally "occupied herself," after the same manner that men and women of literary temperament, who are not only professional authors, have from time immemorial (and so will, until time shall be no more) relieved fervour and indulged imagination by writing down their thoughts and impressions, and chronicling their hopes and emotions when the spirit moved them or at times of leisure when they desired some entertainment or mental exercise. These instinctive writers—good and bad—have their various mannerisms and are all more or less absorbed and shut off from things of sense by their occupation. Many of

them enunciate great truths and are inspired by higher apprehensions and clearer visions of eternal verities than those irradiating the minds of the generality. The mere faculty of concentration gives most of them a power of insight that has its influence for readers. In some few, the aptitude for concentration is intensified and appertains to the marvellous.

Catherine was one of the few. It must not therefore be held that her words were dictated from on high in any special or supernatural manner, or that her literary ecstasy was a trance condition in which her mouth uttered thoughts of a Divine personality or of a superconscious soul that was not subject to the intellect and imagination of the interpreter and transcriber. If "The Book" was a work that stood apart from her other writings in her affection for and faith in it, it was because it was in very truth the autobiography of her spirit's life and the register of her fondest hopes and fancies. In the Process—a body of evidence taken by the court of Rome from many witnesses who having known her in life venerated her after death as a saint indeed—it is recorded that the "Dialogue" was written by her not all at once, but from time to time in her life's course. This statement tallies with her own reference to it and does not contradict the information of Maconi that describes how pages written by her own hand were collected and kept for a time, but were subsequently lost. The work preserved for us is not all of the work that Catherine undoubtedly finished during the months of her resting between her return from Florence and departure from

Rome, but it is enough and more than enough to give it rank as a glory of Italian and of religious literature. A few more passages not hitherto cited must be given, if only to indicate the character and beauty of the many, many more that cannot be copied here. All are taken from Mr Algar Thorold's edition of 1896.

Concerning *Discretion*, the teachings of that Voice which Catherine described as *speaking in her mind*, while she represented it, with literary mystery, as issuing from a Divine mouth, included the following pregnant words:—

"... Some time ago ... when thou wert desirous of doing great penance for My sake. asking, 'What can I do to endure suffering for Thee, O Lord?' I replied to thee, speaking in thy mind, 'I take delight in few words and many works.' I wished to show thee that he who merely calls on Me with the sound of words saying, 'Lord, Lord, I would do something for Thee,' and he who desires for My sake to mortify his body with many penances, and not his own will, did not give Me much pleasure, but that I desired the manifold works of manly endurance with patience, together with the other virtues ... intrinsic to the soul, all of which must be in activity in order to obtain fruits worthy of grace. All other works, founded on any other principle than this, I judge to be a mere calling with words, because they are finite works and I, who am Infinite, seek infinite works, that is an infinite perfection of love.

"I wish therefore that the works of penance and of other corporal exercises, should be observed merely as means, and not as the fundamental

affection of the soul. For if the principal affection of the soul were placed in penance, I should receive a finite thing like a word, which, when it has issued from the mouth is no more, unless it have issued with affection of the soul, which conceives and brings forth virtue in truth, that is unless the finite operation which I have called a word, should be joined with the affection of love, in which case it would be grateful and pleasant to Me. And this is because such a work should not be alone, but accompanied by true discretion, using corporal works as means, and not as the principal foundation, for it would not be becoming that that principal foundation should be placed in penance only, or in any exterior corporal act, such works being finite, since they are done in finite time and also because it is often profitable that the creature omit them, and even that she be made to do so."

. . . . . .

"And then I said that I desired few words and many actions; by the use of the word 'many' I assign no particular number to thee, because the affection of the soul founded in love, which gives life to all the virtues and good works, should increase infinitely, and yet I do not, by this, exclude words, I merely said that I wished few of them, showing thee that every actual operation, as such, was finite, and therefore I called them of little account; but they please Me when they are performed as the instruments of virtue, and not as a principal end in themselves.

. . . . . .

"However, no one should judge that he has greater perfection, because he performs great penances, and

gives himself in excess to the slaying of his body, than he who does less, inasmuch as neither virtue nor merit consists therein; for otherwise he would be in an evil case, who, from some legitimate reason was unable to do actual penance. Merit consists in the virtue of love alone, flavoured with the light of true discretion, without which the soul is worth nothing. And this love should be directed to Me endlessly, boundlessly, since I am the Supreme and the Eternal Truth. The soul can therefore place neither laws nor limits to her love for Me; but her love for her neighbour, on the contrary, is ordered in certain conditions. The light of discretion (which proceeds from love as I have told thee) gives to the neighbour a conditioned love, one that, being ordered aright, does not cause the injury of sin to self in order to be useful to others, for, if one single sin were committed to save the whole world from Hell, or to obtain one great virtue, the motive would not be a rightly ordered or discreet love, but rather indiscreet, for it is not lawful to perform even one act of great virtue and profit to others, by means of the guilt of sin. Holy discretion ordains that the soul should direct all her powers to My service with a manly zeal, and that she should love her neighbour with such devotion that she would lay down a thousand times, if it were possible, the life of her body for the salvation of souls, enduring pains and torments so that her neighbour may have the life of grace, and giving her temporal substance for the profit and relief of his body.

"This is the supreme office of discretion which proceeds from charity. So thou seest how discreetly every soul who wishes for grace, should pay

her debts, that is, should love Me with an infinite love and without measure, but her neighbour with measure, with a restricted love, as I have said, not doing herself the injury of sin in order to be useful to others.

"And this true love knows well, because she carries with herself the light of true discretion, that light which dissipates all darkness, takes away ignorance, and is the condiment of every instrument of virtue. Holy discretion is a prudence which can never be cheated, a fortitude which cannot be beaten, a perseverance from end to end stretching from Heaven to earth, that is from knowledge of Me to knowledge of self, and from love of Me to love of others. And the soul escapes dangers by her true humility, and by her prudence, flies all the nets of the world and its creatures, and with unarmed hands, that is through much endurance, discomfits the devil and the flesh with its sweet and glorious light; knowing, by it, her own fragility, she renders to her weakness its due of hatred."

In regard to obedience—especially the obedience practised in that "Ship of Safety and Perfection," the Religious Orders—we find in the "Dialogue" that religious promise obedience to their superior, the superior promising them in return Eternal Life, while outside the orders, men vow obedience to fellow-creatures, but, not having entered into a contract, they may withdraw this obedience. Catherine advanced the extreme Catholic view that obedience is a virtue and profitable in itself, not only a means to an end as are penances, fasts and macerations.

"Oh! delightful obedience! Oh! pleasant! Oh!

sweet! Oh! illuminative! For thou hast scattered the darkness of self-love. Thou oh! vivifying obedience, givest the life of grace to the soul, who has chosen thee for spouse, slaying his own will, which brings war and death to the soul. Thou art so generous that thou subjectest thyself to every rational creature. Thou art benignant and kind and meekly bearest the greatest weights, for thou art accompanied by fortitude and true patience. Thou art crowned with true perseverance, thou dost not fail through the importunity of thy superior on account of the heavy loads which he indiscreetly may impose upon thee, but with the light of faith endurest everything.

"What more can we say, dearest and beloved daughter of this most excellent virtue? We will say that it is a good without any admixture of evil —that it remains hidden in the ship—so that no contrary wind may hurt it, that it causes the soul to advance leaning on the arms of the order, and of her superior, and not on her own, because the truly obedient man has not to give an account of himself to Me—*his superior has that responsibility.*"

Thus, in the "Dialogue," is seen very clearly the progress of Catherine's soul through ardent devotion, exquisite rhapsody, sensible activity, keen perception and a deep sense of decency and order, to a resting on the authority of an ecclesiastical system and a human priest. There is seen in it, also, the woman of naturally keen insight, and great powers of spiritual apprehension, refusing at points the testimony of her own vision and closing her mind at times to the appeals of her own reason on account of her prepossession by a theory of Church

foundation and government, and because your true Catholic must see complete logical sequence in all faith and practice and must be convinced that all has been told, revealed and done, that has to be told, revealed and done in religion upon earth. Catherine held fast to dogma and, for all her penetration into the secret of the wounded side of Jesus —that *Arcana Dei* which a biographer of her own school has told us is that which Catherine rightly divined as the expression of infinite love under finite conditions—was always seeking to reduce to a body of definable, limited practice, the soul of indefinable, unlimited thought. The edifice of Christianity, as Catherine came to conceive it, stood only upon Authority. For those who resisted or did not bow to Authority, in the symbol and person of the Pope of Rome, there was, according to Catherine's doctrine—not happily according to her feeling—small hope of salvation.

It was in the state of mind and belief to which the finishing of her "Dialogue" brought her, that in November 1378 she set out for Rome. Her presence had been commanded there by Pope Urban VI. She desired to obey the command without fuss or ceremony and required only a small group of her most intimate followers to accompany her. But the opportunity for a holy pilgrimage was too propitious not to be seized on by some, and there were those for whom the darkness of a considerable absence of the light of their lives, was unbearable.

Lapa Benincasa, become in her age a Mantellata, junior in the order to her own child, was in Florence when Catherine left Siena, but followed her to

Rome later. The Saint was accompanied there by her devoted "sisters" Lisa, Alexia, Francesca and Giovanna di Capo, and by her two secretaries Neri di Landoccio and the latest converted son, trophy of her sojourn in the "place of hermits" beyond Florence, Barduccio Canigiani. For Stephen Maconi, his anxious mother "after the flesh," seems to have found family employment to detain him in Siena. But he was with the party in spirit—as letters between him and Neri prove—and Catherine, even in the midst of arduous political affairs in the capital of Christendom, was always flying in spirit to Siena, there to hover over this "son" who was as her own.

The schism in the Church which came in this Urban's time is an event of history that cannot, and need not, be related in any detail in this study of a woman's life. It must be recalled, however, that strife was great among the cardinals, and greater still between the cardinals and the Roman people, as to whether a Frenchman or an Italian should wear the tiara; whether the Holy See should remain in its ancient place or be transported once again to Avignon; whether, in fact, Rome or the King of France should be Pope. Uproarious scenes, both in and out of conclave, marked the election of Bartholomew Prignano, Archbishop of Bari. For a day during the long discussions of the college, one Tebaldeschi of St Peter's was presented as pontiff to the mob that clamoured for an assurance that no Frenchman was being chosen. Bari was finally selected; for his virtues, by some, as a sop to popular passions, by many, and because he was the alternative of a worse choice, by others.

But he was chosen by due process of canonical law and confirmed in his dignity by the cardinals, who acknowledged that Tebaldeschi's name had been shouted only as a subterfuge, and who besought and received offices and favours from the enthroned Urban, who speedily proved himself a "terrible fellow" for reform. The inconvenience of his zeal had soon the effect of stirring up against him a party led by the still more "terrible" (and in a different way) Cardinal Robert of Geneva, the hero—save the mark!—of Cesena. This redoubtable warrior assumed, first at Fondi and afterwards at Avignon, the papal dignity and issued an encyclical declaring Urban's election null and void.

It was in the beginning of the schism, that Urban having perhaps some curiosity to see the Holy Maid, and wishing to strengthen his position by gathering round him all the strongest and best of the faithful, summoned Catherine to his presence. We are told that on the very day of her arrival in the Holy City she was sent for to the Vatican, and at Urban's request made an address to the cardinals and prelates assembled. The same effect followed her words there that had followed them in the Palace of the Popes at Avignon and in the Hall of the Signory at Florence. Men were persuaded or dismayed according to the purity or guilt of their intentions. Urban, not so easily moved as Gregory, was yet enthusiastic in his praises of the orator, who was at once both vehement and gentle. Her address to the body of cardinals, given at the Pope's request, was founded on her constant theme of manliness. "Quit you like men" was ever a burden of her speeches and her letters. Urban

was much impressed. "This poor woman puts us to shame," he cried, then praised Catherine much in the Lord and explained that he called her not "poor" (or "mean") woman "out of contempt, but by reason of her sex, which should make her timid even if we were confident; whereas, on the contrary, it is she who now encourages us."

CHAPTER XVIII

Regarding the origin and course of the war with the Anti-Pope, and the progress of the reforms of Urban VI., passages in Catherine's letters speak eloquently. Just before and after going to Rome she was kept busy, brain and hand—for she often dictated to two or three secretaries at once and she had now learned, as she believed miraculously, to write—sending appeals for support of Urban to kings, cardinals and governments. One follows, almost breathlessly, the course of the election of her Pope and the defection of the Anti-Pope in her vehement epistle to three Italian cardinals who still hesitated a little to declare openly for the Frenchman.

"Where is the gratitude which you ought to have for the Bride who has nourished you at her breast? I see in us naught but such ingratitude as dries up the fountain of pity. What shows me that you are ungrateful, coarse and mercenary? The persecution which you, together with others, are inflicting on that sweet Bride, at a time when you ought to be shields, to ward off the blows of heresy. In spite of which, you clearly know the truth, that Pope Urban VI. is truly Pope, the highest Pontiff, chosen in orderly election, not influenced by fear, truly rather by divine inspiration than by your human industry. And so you announced it to us, which was the truth. Now you have turned your backs like poor mean knights; your shadow has made you afraid. You have divided you from the

truth which strengthens us, and drawn close to falsehood, which weakens soul and body, depriving you of temporal and spiritual grace. What made you do this? The poison of self-love which has infected the world. That is what has made your pillars lighter than straw. Flowers you who shed no perfume, but stench that makes the whole world reek! No lights you placed in a candlestick, that you might spread the faith; but having hidden your light under the bushel of pride, and become not extenders, but contaminators of the faith, you shed darkness over yourselves and others. You should have been angels on earth, placed to release us from the devils of hell, and performing the office of angels, by bringing back the sheep into the obedience of Holy Church, and you have taken the office of devils. That evil which you have in yourselves, you wish to infect us with, withdrawing us from obedience to Christ on earth, and leading us into obedience to antichrist, a member of the devil, as you are too, so long as you shall abide in this heresy.

"This is not the kind of blindness that springs from ignorance. It has not happened to you because people have reported one thing to you while another is so. No, for you know what the truth is: it was you who announced it to us, and not we to you. Oh, how mad you are! For you told us the truth, and you want yourselves to taste a lie! Now you want to corrupt this truth, and make us see the opposite, saying that you chose Pope Urban from fear, which is not so; but anyone who says it—speaking to you without reverence, because you have deprived yourselves of reverence—lies up to his eyes. For it is evident to anyone who wished

to see, who it is that you presented as your choice through fear—that was Messer di Santo Pietro.[1] You might say to me, 'Why do you not believe us? We know the truth as to whom we chose better than you.' And I reply, that you yourselves have shown me that you deserted the truth in many ways, so that I ought not to believe you that Pope Urban VI. is not the true Pope. If I turn to the beginnings of your life, I do not recognise in you so good and holy a life that you would shrink from a lie for conscience' sake. What shows me that your life is badly governed? The passion of heresy. If I turn to the election ordained by your lips, we knew that you chose him canonically and not through fear. We have already said that he whom you presented to the people through fear was Messer di Santo Pietro. What proves to me the regular election with which you chose Messer Bartolommeo, Archbishop of Bari, who to-day is made in truth Pope Urban VI.? In the solemnity with which his coronation was observed, this truth is clear to us. That the solemnity was carried out in good faith is shown by the reverence which you gave him and the favours asked from him, which you have used in all sorts of ways. You cannot deny this truth except with plain lies.

"Ah, foolish men, worthy of a thousand deaths! As blind you do not see your own wrong, and have fallen into such confusion that you make of your own selves liars and idolaters. For even were it true (which it is not; nay, I assert again that Pope Urban VI. is the true Pope) but were it true what you say, would you not have lied to us when you

[1] Tebaldeschi.

told us that he was the highest pontiff, as he is? And would you not falsely have shown him reverence, adoring him for Christ on earth? And would you not have practised simony, in trying for favours and using them unlawfully? Yes, indeed. Now they, and you with them, have made an antipope, as far as your action and outward appearance go, since you consented to remain on the spot, when the incarnate demons chose the demon!

"You might say to me: 'No, we did not choose him.' I do not know how I can believe that. For I do not believe that you could have borne to stay there otherwise, had you given your life for it; at least the fact that you suppressed the truth, and did not burst out with it—for this would not have been within your power—makes me inclined to think so. Although, perhaps, you did less wrong than the others in your intention, yet you did do wrong with all the rest. What can I say? I can say that he who is not for the truth is against the truth; he who was not at that time for Christ on earth Pope Urban VI. was against him. Therefore I tell you that you did wrong with the antipope: and I may say that he was chosen a member of the devil; for had he been a member of Christ, he would have chosen death rather than consent to so great an evil, for he well knows the truth, and cannot excuse himself through ignorance. Now you have committed all these faults in regard to this devil; that is, to confess him as Pope, which he surely is not, and to show reverence to whom you should not. You have deserted the light and gone into darkness: the truth and joined you to a lie. On what side soever I find nothing but lies. You

are worthy of torture which, I tell you in truth and unburden my conscience thereof, unless you return to obedience with true humility, will fall upon you.

"O misery upon misery, and blindness upon blindness, which does not let its wrong be seen, nor the loss to soul and body! For had you seen it, you would not have deserted the truth so lightly, in servile fear, passionate all, like proud people and arbitrary, accustomed to pleasant and soft dealings from men! You could not endure, not only an actual correction indeed but even a harsh word of reproof made you lift up rebellious heads. This is the reason why you changed. And it clearly reveals the truth to us; for, before Christ on earth began to sting you, you confessed him and reverenced him as the Vicar of Christ that he is. But this last fruit that you bear, which brings forth death, shows what kind of trees you are; and that your tree is planted in the earth of pride, which springs from the self-love that robs you of the light of reason.

"Oh me, no more thus for the love of God! Take refuge in humbling you beneath the mighty hand of God, in obedience to His Vicar, while you have time; for when the time is passed there will be no more help for us. Recognise your faults, that you may be humble, and know the infinite goodness of God, who has not commanded the earth to swallow you up, nor beasts to devour you; nay, but has given you time, that you may correct your soul. But if you shall not recognise this, what He has given you as a grace shall turn to your great judgment. But if you will return to

the fold, and feed in truth at the breast of the Bride of Christ, you shall be received in mercy, by Christ in heaven and by Christ on earth, despite the iniquity you have wrought. I beg that you delay no more, nor kick against the prick of conscience that I know is perpetually stabbing you. And let not confusion of mind, over the evil that you have wrought, so overcome you, that you abandon your salvation in weariness and despair, as seeming unable to find help. Not so, must you do; but in living faith, hold firm hope in your Creator, and return humbly to your yoke; for the last sin of obstinacy and despair would be the worst, and most hateful to God and the world. Arise, then, into the light! For without light you would walk in darkness, as you have done up to now."

So Catherine pleaded, denounced and reasoned on religious and moral grounds, but urged also by an ecclesiastical and national policy as she more explicitly shows in another paragraph which runs:

"Notwithstanding that the father might have treated you with nothing but reproof, you ought not, therefore, to have assumed the lead, denying his holiness in any way. Speaking entirely in the natural sense—for according to virtue we ought all to be equal—speaking humanly, Christ on earth being an Italian and you Italian, I see no reason but self-love why passion for your country could not move you as it did the Ultramontanes. Cast it to earth now, and do not wait for time, since time does not wait for you—trampling such selfishness underfoot, with hate of vice and love of virtue."

It has been said in another book that Catherine's letters to these cardinals present the official view of the schism. What other view could she—an official of the Roman papacy—take? The same view is presented also in her letters at this time to Giovanna of Naples, from whom she had once hoped much as an Italian queen and a Catholic mother in God. To the court of this queen she would gladly have gone as the Holy Father's emissary had not Urban, persuaded by the anxious Father Raymund, decided that the mission was an unfit one for a woman. The character of Giovanna was too unscrupulous; she was too much led and dominated by passion to be fair to the Saint even though she might—as it was later found that she did—keep Catherine's many eloquent letters—as stern as tender and as tender as stern—tied in a packet in a place of treasures.

Upon the imaginary grounds, that the style of Catherine's letter to the Company of St George—the English freebooters—differs from that of any other letter of hers, it has been questioned that she wrote it. But Professor Gardner tells us that "no student of the manuscripts can entertain any doubt" that it is her own; and without his evidence, one might feel very sure that the words, with the spirit of them, belonged to Catherine. The style is glowing, but when was Catherine's style not inflamed, and when, if she had a cause to serve, and enemies of that cause to combat, not denunciatory? Her letter to the English is less "full of abuse" than the one she had so recently written to the three Italian cardinals. Yet it is not for any excess of righteous anger, or for any outspoken abuse of those whom

she believed to be corrupting the truth, and making to be believed a lie, that the letter is unworthy of Catherine, although written by her. Its fault of faults lies in its revelation of the fact that the Pope's troops, as those of the Cardinal Robert of Geneva, were incited to loyalty, and to zeal in slaying, by promises of booty. Cesena's lesson had not been learned by Catherine. She was a woman of, not in advance of, her times. These are the sentences, in what has been called "a prose poem in honour of ideal Christian chivalry," which show her fall from idealism into expediency: "with desire of seeing you . . . faithful to Holy Mother Church and to the Holiness of Pope Urban VI., true Sovereign Pontiff, all combat royally and faithfully for the truth, *that you may receive the fruit of your labours*. . . . If you die, you gain life eternal and are set in a place safe and not subject to change; and if you survive, you have made a sacrifice of yourselves voluntarily to God, and *you will be able to keep what you possess with a good conscience.*"

Another deplorable descent of Catherine was her defence of the excommunication of Giovanna, Queen of Naples, and her association with the Pope in his commands to Louis, King of Hungary, and Charles of Durazzo—kinsmen of the miserable Giovanna—to seize her kingdom and possess themselves of her crown. Catherine certainly did not foresee the ill-treatment that was to be meted out to Giovanna, under the sanction of the "Holy Father," and she spared no pains and efforts, first to bring her "Mother in God," the queen, back to pure ways, and to allegiance to Pope Urban. Beautiful

and persuasive had been the letters Catherine sent to her before the Pope had decided on the excommunication. "Oh! me! open the eye of your mind, and sleep no more in so great misery. Do not await the moment of death—after which it will not help you to make excuses, nor to say: 'I thought to do good.' For you know that you do ill, but like a sick and passionate woman, you let yourself be guided by your passions. And if you should say, 'It is still doubtful to me,' stay neutral till it is made clear to you, and do not do what you should not. . . . Fear, fear God, and place Him before your eyes, and think that God sees you, and His eye is upon you, and His justice wills that every fault be punished and every good rewarded. Be merciful, ah be merciful to yourself."

But Giovanna was never merciful to herself. She had to bear indeed the penalty of many lurid sins. But all that Catherine was concerned about in these letters was the political attitude of the kingdom of Naples; that it should come into the obedience—with all temporalities as well as all spiritualities—of Urban and not render submission to "Clement." From a human point of view it was exasperating enough to a daughter of Siena, to see Italians—particularly princes among them—less moved by passion for their country than were the Ultramontanes who fought for the retention of the papal court at Avignon. Human too was the spite—although in Catherine's perfected nature only political work could have engendered it—of Catherine's appeal, when all her words to Giovanna had returned to her void, to Louis of Hungary. "Will you endure that Antichrist, member of the demon,

and a woman, should cast all our faith into ruin, darkness and confusion?"

Yet, as has been said, Catherine did not expect such punishment to fall on the woman she had addressed so often and so sincerely as "sweetest mother," "dearest mother," as came at last. She hoped yet for her conversion, although it should be her conversion by fire. Even as, in her warnings to the recalcitrant cardinals of their worthiness of torture "which I tell you in truth . . . unless you return to obedience with true humility will fall on you," she had been content to leave the application of fire and sword to the hands of God, so now she hoped that the advance of King Louis would be God's method of reforming the queen at last. "Much good will result from your coming. Perhaps this truth will be made clear without human power, and *this poor little woman, the Queen, will be delivered from her obstinacy either by fear or by love*. You see how long Christ on earth has borne with her, in not having deprived her in fact of what she has lawfully forfeited, only because he waited for her amendment and for love of you. If now he were to do it, he would be acting justly and stand excused in God's sight and in yours."

The desperate sadness of this passage in Catherine's letter lies in the fact that she had been brought to the point of committing absolute judgment to the hands of the Pope. In the last resort, Urban's fulminations might render the hapless queen the prey of all Europe; might bring her kingdom and its people into abject poverty and miserable isolation, besides dealing death, torture

and injury to life and limb of the monarch and many among her subjects.

But work as she would, trust as she would, hope as she would, no success rewarded the policies of Rome, Catherine so ardently advocated. The schism grew wider. Robert of Geneva reigned as Pope for many "faithful" in Avignon, while Urban continued to alienate by his harshness, many who might have yielded him devotion had he pursued the gentler way Catherine so often urged on him. He offended by his reforms those priests and prelates—and they were in the majority—who wished to batten on abuses of spiritual power. The reforming zeal of the Pontiff and the continuance by a pure-lived zealot on the throne of the Fisherman, of that policy of worldly aggrandisement and combative assertion of temporal authority which had for long been conducting the papacy, as the tribune of the nations, to its doom, having failed to gain for the Church that respect which Catherine had anticipated, Urban resorted to arms and, while bloody battles were fought, Catherine, viewing herself as another Moses, prayed for the success of the papal troops and urged on the combatants.

We have seen how she let herself again be used as tool, cat's paw and prophetess of policies of violence which were not naturally her own. The truer woman showed in her letter to "the maintainers of the Republic of Rome" where she bade them have care of the wounded, although in this letter too we see the craftiness of the politician in her argument that these rulers should bear themselves "charitably and peacefully" towards the mercenaries she termed "instruments of Christ," in

order that these might be preserved for the aid of the Eternal City against Antichrist. Let them not have any cause for turning against you, she urged.

Truly, Catherine felt herself to be set on the field where blood was being shed "for love of the Blood," and her only complaint was of those "pusillanimous hearts" who, fearing danger and death, were too ready to turn back or at least to remain quiescent. To Father Raymund, who, being sent by Urban on a mission to the King of France, to gain the royal recognition of Urban's papal office, stayed his journey at Genoa for fear of falling into the hands of Clement's men if he proceeded further, she wrote: "If you had been faithful you would not have had all this hesitation, nor yielded to doubts about God and about me."

Raymund, very naturally, had feared to let his "manlike" daughter and mother know of his failure to reach his goal. Catherine's scorn was indeed something to fear. If he had not been able to go upright, she told him, he should have gone crawling; if not as a friar, then as a pilgrim; and if not with money, then by alms, he might have purchased his access to the king and his "faithful obedience would have wrought more in the sight of God, and in the hearts of men, than all human prudence would do." Yet Catherine had known and loved Raymund too long and too well to be really angry with him, and Urban seems to have been satisfied that the good father's discretion was the better part of valour, so far as the papal cause was concerned. Characteristically, Catherine blamed herself more than she accused Raymund for the

failure of his mission. Her sins had prevented her from seeing in him the timidity that doomed his embassy to failure. Had she also failed to see in Stephen Maconi, left in Siena, the carelessness and too great buoyancy which prevented him from taking her serious view of the affairs of Holy Church and of the need for the enlistment of all faithful in the war against Antichrist—a war in which those who could not fight standing should fight crawling? In any case, Stephen needed much exhortation to rouse him from his lukewarmness of heart. Catherine bade him hasten in his whole manhood to the holy city of martyrs to test the gold of his virtue and to suffer for the glory of God. But Stephen could not be inflamed, though in the heyday of his youth and strength, to set all Italy afire. He could not even obtain from the Signory of his native town, and hers, a consent to send subsidies to Rome for the maintenance of the Pope's war. The governors of the republic-city agreed in all spiritual things to obey Urban as their true pastor, but in temporal matters they pleaded their poverty and the misery to which the long Interdict had reduced Siena. Yet Stephen seems to have worked well for the cause, in this particular. "I promise you I have so much spoken about it," he wrote to Neri in Rome with Catherine, "that I was several times told that I talked more than befitted me on the subject. But I reck little of this," he added, "if only I saw done what is to the honour of God." So after all the "manful" spirit beloved of Catherine was in Stephen, although she could not get him to set his feet on the field of blood on which she had taken stand.

But there were policies of Urban that the Saint

supported, perhaps even instigated, which redound more to her honour, both as Saint and Stateswoman, than the assistance she gave the Pontiff in extorting subsidies from the town of her birth and other commonwealths, and in countenancing pillage and despoilment by the papal troops. Among these better policies was that which had led to her own summons to Rome. It was the policy of surrounding Urban with pure-lived and true-hearted servants of the Church—men and women poor in pocket, but rich in honesty and thoughtfulness—who should form about the pontifical throne a phalanx of spirituality and rightmindedness, wherewith all the envenomed attacks of the debauched and the vicious, as well as the more ruthless assaults of the sectaries and schismatics, might be repelled. The world should be shown that the "Vicar of Christ" believed in Christliness; that the Father of Christendom cherished true sons and danghters of God. Letters to the Prior of Gorgona, to John of the Cells, to Father William Flete—an English recluse of fame, whose hermitage was in North Italy—and to a number of other friars and hermits, were despatched by Urban in December 1378, within a month of the date of Catherine's arrival in Rome. Her own letter which accompanied the Pope's bull to the Prior of Gorgona—the man of piety who had delighted so in Catherine's address to the monks of his island convent—shows the fervour of her hope that the coming of the hermits would be for the glory of Christ in Heaven, as well as for the succour of Christ on earth. Most of those addressed responded in person, but Father Flete and some others, although personal friends of Catherine,

would not come. Upon these, Catherine poured indignant contempt for their "sensuality of soul." She saw nothing but self-will and self-indulgence in their refusals. But given the facts that these hermits were men of God; that, in the times in which they lived, such lives as they led in woods and caves, apart from busy haunts of men and separated even from the community life of so-called "religious," were lives that had a purpose—were it only the purpose of protest against the luxury, venality and arrogance that infected churchmen in their day—there was perhaps some reason, even some devotion and some bravery, in their refusals. Unable to rise to the dignity of real reformers, and incapable of uprooting the evils they saw growing rankly in the body-politic of Christendom, they had conceived it the better part to keep themselves unspotted from the world and to pursue in retirement such studies, meditations and devotions as they were themselves best fitted for. They had, it would seem, scant faith in any schemes for the reconstitution of the court of Rome generated in the life of Rome, but little hope in any promises of righteousness from a Holy Father who made war upon his children and deprived them of sacraments, not because they would not, but because they could not pay all the tolls he chose to demand. Reading Catherine's retorts to these canny, cautious or timid ones—it is difficult to say which adjective should be applied to either or any of them—one glows with her enthusiasm for the papal cause which for her was the cause of the union of Christendom. From her point of view, the defection in the hour of need of these long-trained and long-devoted

VIRGIN AND CHILD WITH ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA AND ST. BERNARD.

By Borgognone.

In the Palazzo Brera, Milan.

servants and slaves of the Cross was indeed the defection of renegades. She had no sense that she herself might be deemed a deserter. Yet to some of these meditators in their hermitages, the gadding "Sister of Penance," as Acting Secretary-of-State to the Sovereign of Christendom, was no longer a "religious" in her right place; no longer a Bride of Christ and "Mamma" of her little ones, doing her duty in that state of life in which it had pleased God to call her. On the contrary, she appeared to them as an erratic, impressionable spinster, excited by the condescension of the Pontiff towards her, who waved the banner of an impossible hope; even the hope that, by a galvanising of the dry bones of the papacy, the defunct theocracy of Rome might live again, and again dictate to princes, governments and peoples the terms upon which they might hold their crowns, their liberties and their consciences.

Though neither sectaries nor heretics, for they founded no systems of belief or of rule and hurled no doubts at time-honoured superstitions and conventions, these hermits were not good Catholics in the sense in which Catherine was. They did no violence to their faiths and dispositions, upon the excuse of a "holy obedience" to the chiefs of their orders or to him whom they acknowledged verbally as the chief of chiefs on earth. They reserved to themselves a right of judgment as to what particular course of action was good for their own souls. But it was not in the nature of Catherine to possess her soul in patience, any more than it was in her creed to put considerations of her own mind's or body's health before considerations of what,

according to the view of Rome, was for the mind's and body's good of the Christian commonwealth. The fire of Catherine is more admirable, more inspiring certainly, than the phlegm of Father William Flete.

Yet calmness, coolness, reflection and private judgment have their uses in spiritual as in political economy. And these qualities are more generally the attributes of male minds like unto those which to Catherine seemed so dogged, self-centred and cowardly, while emotion, enthusiasm, impulse and submission to the will of others, are feminine qualities which serve humanity best when exercised in domestic and religious realms and applied only indirectly—either as influences, incentives or encouragements—in political or the larger philanthropic spheres. In the case of Catherine and her desert fathers the positions were reversed. The cool and contemplative kept to what was specifically the religious life and the fiery, active one was at the helm of affairs. Hers was the hand behind the throne of justice, the voice that led the fighting men to conquest. But that was because all political and religious life was in an inverted position. Religion was concerned more with temporalities than with spiritualities, and politics were as a game played between ecclesiastical and lay powers for the possession of authority over the souls of men.

The clash of arms and din of party cries, the shocks of collision as Guelph opposed the interests of Ghibelline and Ghibelline of Guelph and the monarchs of the rising states of the modern world —Charles of France, Edward of England, Louis of Hungary, Giovanna of Naples, Wencelas of

Germany and Amadeo of Savoy grappled with each other for the possession of independence, of territory and of that maritime and commercial power which was just beginning to be perceived as a valuable asset of national existence, made a noisy world and one in which the religious had no concern except as religious, as the preceptors, exhorters and reprovers of individual souls and consciences of men. But Catherine, with no eyes for the social and political developments going on around her, and missing entirely the meaning of those words "The kingdom of God is within you," still hugged the belief that an outward and visible theocracy could be established by the Pope in Rome, under which all the nations of the earth should be governed without strife or contention until days of parting and weeping should be no more. So she kept to the last by the Pope's side, maintained to the last her political correspondence, hoped to the last for the rehabilitation of Christendom.

Urban disappointed her. Dear woman, no one man, were he Pontiff or prophet, could have accomplished all she hoped of and for him in the short span of days given to him to work in! But she held to the faith that another "Christ on earth" to come in time, would "fulfil" the Church in her full office, as "Bride of Christ" and Mother of the whole world.

CHAPTER XIX

ALTHOUGH for Catherine the days of the fulfilment of her prophecy concerning the true and perfect Pope to be, were surely coming, she knew she would not live to see them. She had reached the age—the mystic Bridegroom's age—of thirty-three. Her attacks of epilepsy or catalepsy, or both—those forces of dislocated nerve currents, and interrupted arterial circulations, which threw her to the ground, and impeded thought, activity and progress with the work she was doing for her Lord—were recurring with greater frequency and violence. Her heart was consumed with sorrow over the absences and even over the flightinesses of well-loved "sons." 'Tis true an Urban ruled and fulminated from the Vatican and there was possibility of an eventual union of Italian states under the suzerainty of a lord in Rome. But there was also a Clement at Avignon and to this Anti-Pope the Queen of Naples bowed her knee.

No words are needed except those of Catherine's own letters to tell us how and in what wise the end came to all her hopings, plannings and workings. The extraordinary unifying power of her mind, which expressed into one essence all experiences of the spirit, intellect and body, and which made of the world, the flesh and the devil one adversary, so that all forces and powers which were not of life, of health or of holiness

were in her view demons. Incarnate or discarnate, they were demons all alike. Sensual, arrogant cardinals or poor, fanatical *fraticelli*, since they attacked the unity of the body Catholic, were named by Catherine "incarnate demons." The torments of her own bodily seizures were also demons, just as the pulses of her own consciousness, and the warm impulses of her own blood had once appeared to her as very devils of lasciviousness and lust.

But the tale of her days' end, as the tale of all her labourings, strivings, livings and doings, is best told by herself.

It was in the intervals of the weeks of the agony of her transition, that she wrote with her own hand the letters to her loved and loving Father Raymund which are not only the most remarkable of all her own letters, but perhaps the most remarkable epistles ever penned by a human hand. It will be seen how great a burden on the mind of Catherine had become the inconvenience of Pope Urban's immoderate and violent judgments and methods. She dreamed one day as she knelt and prayed that the Ship of the Church descended on her shoulders. It had come to that! She, poor woman, felt the whole responsibility of Urban's papacy, which, for her, was the crown of the organised Church. There was no one else to uphold it faithfully, staunchly, honestly, by the methods of kindness and love. And the pressure of that dream-ship crushed her. She fell prostrate and senseless beneath the weight of it, and her disciples came and carried home her lifeless form. Animation came again; but she was not as before. The end

was near. She knew it, but she wrote on, including with the record of the sufferings that seemed to her to carry their own message from the mind of God, a will and testament, by which she disposed of the dear ones of her family in the ways that seemed to her best. Hear her ardent words!

". . . I was breathless with grief from the crucified desire which had been newly conceived in the sight of God. For the light of the mind had mirrored itself in the Eternal Trinity; and in that abyss was seen the dignity of rational being, and the misery into which man falls by fault of mortal sin, and the necessity of Holy Church, which God revealed to his servant's bosom; and how no one can attain to enjoy the beauty of God in the abyss of the Trinity, but by means of the Sweet Bride; for it befits all to pass by the door of Christ crucified, and this door is not found elsewhere than in Holy Church. She saw that this Bride brought life to men, because she holds in herself such life that there is no one can kill her; and that she gave fortitude and light, and that there is no one who can weaken her, in her true self, or cast her into darkness. And she saw that her fruit never fails, but increases for ever.

"Then said Eternal God: 'All this dignity, which your intellect could not compass, is given you men by Me. Consider, therefore, in grief and bitterness, and thou shalt see that people are approaching this Bride only for her outer raiment, that is, for temporal possessions. But thou seest her wholly deserted by those who seek her very essence—that is, the fruit of Blood. He who pays not the price of charity with true humility and the light of most

holy faith, would share this, not unto life, but unto death ; he would do like the thief, who takes what is not his. For the fruit of the Blood is for those who pay the price of love, because she is founded in love, and is very Love itself. And I will,' said Eternal God, 'that every one give to her through love, according as I give to my servants to minister in divers ways, even as they have received. But I grieve that I find none who ministers these. Nay, it seems that every one has abandoned her. But I will be the mediator once more.'

"And the pain and fire of her desire increasing she cried in the sight of God, saying: 'What can I do, O unsearchable Fire?' And His benignity replied: 'Do thou offer thy life anew. Thou canst refrain from ever giving thyself repose. To this work I have appointed thee—thee and all who follow thee or are to follow. Take ye then heed never to relax; but always to increase in desires ; for I, impelled by love, am taking good heed to aid you with My bodily and spiritual grace. . . . Contemplate Me and behold the Bridegroom of this Bride, that is the highest Pontiff, and see his holy and good intention—an intention without reserves. And as the Bride is alone, so also is the Bridegroom. I permit him to cleanse Holy Church by methods which he applies immoderately, and by fear, with which he inspires his subjects. But another shall come who shall draw close to her in love, and shall fulfil her. It shall befall this Bride as it befalls the soul ; for first fear possesses her, but when she is divested of sins, then love fills her and clothes her with virtue. All this it shall do, with sweet sustaining, sweet and suave, of those

who shall nourish them at her breast with truth. But do thou this: say to My Vicar that he pacify himself to the extent of his power, and grant peace to whosoever will receive it. And to the columns of Holy Church say that if they wish to remedy great disasters they are to do thus: let them unite and form a cloak to cover the methods of their father that may seem faulty. And let them adopt a well-ordered life, close to those who fear and love me, and cling together, casting their lower natures aside. If they do thus, I who am Light will give them the light needful to Holy Church. And seeing that there is something which ought to be done among them, let them refer it to My Vicar in true unity, quickly, boldly, and after much reflection. He then will be constrained not to resist their good wills; for he really has a good and holy intention.'"

This then was the message the Ship of Holy Church brought to her ardent soul.

Relating it to Father Raymund, she told him: "The tongue does not suffice to narrate such mysteries, nor what intellect saw and affection conceived."

This vision was in the morning of the first day of those days of mystery in which was consummated the sacrifice of Catherine's earth life. "And the day passing by, full of marvel, the evening came."

"And I," so continued Catherine's letter, "feeling that the heart was so drawn by the force of love that I could offer no resistance to going to the place of prayer, and feeling that disposition come upon me that was at the time of my death"—this was once early in her career when, in a state of great

mental exaltation, her bodily senses remained so long suspended that all about her thought her gone from life and she herself had the sensation of passing out of the body, which sensation seems to have been repeated during those days that preceded her final dissolution—"prostrated me with great compunction because I had served the Bride of Christ with much ignorance and negligence, and had been the cause that others had done the same. And rising, with the impression of what I had said before the eye of my mind, God placed me before Himself—not but that I am always before Him, because He contains everything in Himself—but in a new way, as if memory, intellect and will had nothing whatever to do with my body. And this Truth was reflected in me with such light that in that abyss were then renewed the mysteries of Holy Church, and all the graces received in my life, past and present, and the day in which my soul was wedded to Him. All which then vanished from me through the increase of the inward fire; and I paid heed only to what should be done, that I should make a sacrifice of myself to God for Holy Church and for the sake of removing ignorance and negligence from those whom God had put into my hands. Then the devils called out havoc upon me, seeking to hinder and slacken with their terrors my free and burning desires. So these beat upon the shell of the body; but desire became the more kindled, crying, 'O Eternal God, receive the sacrifice of my life in this mystical body of Holy Church! I have naught to give save what thou hast given to me. Take then my heart, and may thy Bride lean her face upon it!' Then Eternal

God, turning the eyes of His mercy, removed my heart, and offered it to Holy Church.

. . . . . .

"Now I say: 'Thanks, thanks be to the Highest God Eternal, who has placed us in the battlefield as knights, to fight for His Bride with the shield of holiest faith. The field is left free to us by that virtue and power which routed the devil who possessed the human race; who was routed, not in the strength of humanity, but of Deity. Thus the devil neither is nor shall be routed by the suffering of our bodies, but by strength of the fire of divine, most ardent and immeasurable love.'"

The letter containing the foregoing passages must have been written about the Day of the Circumcision—New Year, 1380. But it was after Sexagesima Sunday that she put forth a final parable of her soul's history and wrote to the receiver of the confidences of her life:

"Father, father and sweetest son, wonderful mysteries has God wrought, from the Day of the Circumcision till now; such that no tongue could suffice to tell them. But let us pass over all that time, and come to Sexagesima Sunday, when occurred, as I am writing you briefly, those mysteries which you shall hear: never have I seemed to bear anything like them. For the pain in my heart was so great, that the tunic which clothed me burst, as much as I could clasp of it; and I circled around in the chapel like a person in spasms. Then Monday coming, in the evening I was constrained to write to Christ on earth and to three cardinals. So I had myself helped and went into the study. And when I had written to Christ

on earth, I had no way of writing more, the pains had so greatly increased in my body. And, waiting a little, the terror of demons began, in such wise that they stunned me entirely; raging against me as if I, worm that I am, had been the means of taking from their hands what they had possessed a long time in Holy Church. So great was the terror with bodily pain, that I wanted to fly from the study and go to the chapel—as if the study had been the cause of my pains. So I rose up and not being able to walk, I leaned on my son Barduccio. But suddenly I was thrown down; and lying there, it seemed to me as if my soul were parted from my body; not in such wise as when it really was parted, for then my soul tasted the good of the Immortals, receiving that highest good together with them; but this now seemed like a special case, for I did not seem to be in the body, but I saw my body as if it had been someone else. And my soul seeing the grief of him who was with me, wished to know if I had any power over the body, to say to him: 'Son, do not fear'; and I saw that I could not move the tongue or any member of it, any more than a body quite dead. Then I let the body stay just as it was; and the intellect was fixed on the abyss of the Trinity. Memory was full of recollections of the need of Holy Church and of all the Christian people; and I cried before His Face, and demanded divine help with assurance, offering to Him my desires, and constraining Him by the Blood of the Lamb and the pains that had been borne. . . . Then I asked for all you others, praying Him that He would fulfil in you His will and my desires. Then I asked that He would save

me from eternal condemnation. And while I stayed thus for a very long time, so that the family was mourning me as dead, at this point all the terror of the demons was gone away. Then the presence of the Humble Lamb came before my soul saying: 'Fear not: for I will fulfil thy desires, and those of My other servants. I will that thou see that I am a good master, who plays the potter, unmaking and remaking vessels as His pleasure is. These My vessels I know how to unmake and remake; and therefore I take the vessel of thy body, and remake it in the garden of Holy Church, in different wise than in past time.' And as this Truth held me close, with ways and words most charming, which I pass over, the body began to breathe a little and to show that the soul had returned to its vessel. Then I was full of wonder. And such pain remained in my heart that I have it there still.

"All pleasure and all refreshment and all food was then taken away from me. Being carried afterwards into a place above, the room appeared full of devils: and they began to wage another battle, the most terrible that I ever had, trying to make me believe and see that I was not she who was in the body, but an impure spirit. I, having invoked the divine help with a sweet tenderness, refusing no labour, yet said: 'God, listen for my help! Lord, haste Thee to help me! Thou hast permitted me to be alive in this battle without the refreshment of the father of my soul, of whom I am deprived for my ingratitude.'

"Two nights and two days passed in these tempests. It is true that mind and desire received

no break, but remained ever fixed on their object; but the body seemed almost to have failed. Afterwards, on the Day of the Purification of Mary, I wished to hear Mass. Then all the mysteries were renewed; and God showed the great need that existed as appeared later; for Rome has all been on the point of revolution, backbiting disgracefully, and with much irreverence. Only God has poured oil on their hearts, and I think the thing will have a good end. Then God imposed this obedience on me, that during the whole of this holy season of Lent I should offer in sacrifice the desires of all the Family, and have Mass celebrated before Him with this one intention alone—that is for Holy Church—and that I should myself hear a Mass every morning at dawn—a thing which you know is impossible to me; but in obedience to Him all things have been possible. And this desire has become so much a part of my flesh, that memory retains nothing else, intellect can see nothing else, and will can desire nothing else.

. . . . . .

"In this way, and many others which I cannot tell, my life is consumed and shed for this sweet Bride: I by this road, and the glorious martyrs with blood. I pray the Divine Goodness soon to let me see the redemption of His people. When it is the hour of terce, I rise from Mass, and you would see a dead woman go to St Peter's; and I enter anew to labour in the ship of Holy Church. There I stay thus till near the hour of vespers: and from this place I would depart neither day nor night until I see this people at least a little steadily established in peace with their father. This body

of mine remains without any food, without even a drop of water: in such sweet physical tortures as I never at any time endured; insomuch that my life hangs by a thread. Now I do not know what the Divine Goodness will do with me: as far as my feelings go, I do not say that I perceive His will in this matter; but as to my physical sensations, it seems to me that this time I am to confirm them with a new martyrdom in the sweetness of my soul—that is, for Holy Church; then, perhaps, He will make me rise again with Him. He will put so an end to my miseries and to my crucified desires. Or He may employ His usual ways to strengthen my body. I have prayed and pray His mercy that His will be fulfilled in me, and that He leave not you or the others orphans. But may He ever guide you in the way of the doctrine of Truth, with true and very perfect light. I am sure that He will do it.

"Now I pray and constrain you, father and son given by that sweet Mother, Mary, that you feel that if God is turning the eye of His mercy upon me, He wills to renew your life; and as dead to all fleshly impulse do you cast yourself into that Ship of Holy Church. And be always discreet in your conversations. You will be able to have the actual cell little; but I wish you to have the cell of the heart always, and always carry it with you. For as you know, while we are locked therein, enemies can do us no wrong. Then every act you shall do, will be guided and ordered of God. Also I beg you that you ripen your heart with holy and true prudence; and that your life be an example to worldly men by your never conforming to the

world's customs. May that generosity towards the poor and that voluntary poverty that you have always practised, be renewed and refreshed in you with true and perfect humility. Do not slacken in these for any dignity or exaltation that God may give you, but descend more deeply into that Valley of Humility, rejoicing in the table of the Cross. . . . Cast from you all tenderness for yourself and all servile fear; for the sweet Church has no need of such folk, but of persons cruel to themselves and compassionate to her. These are things which I beg you to study to observe."

Then after giving the directions concerning her book and other writings, already quoted, she proceeded: "I beg you also that, so far as shall be possible to you, you be a shepherd and ruler to this Family, as a father, keeping them in the joy of charity and in perfect union; that they be not scattered as sheep without a shepherd. And I think to do more for them and for you after my death than in my life. I shall pray the Eternal Truth that He pour forth upon you others, all plenitude of grace and gifts which He may have given to my soul, so that you may be lights placed in a candlestick. I beg you to pray the Eternal Bridegroom that He make me manfully fulfil His obedience, and pardon me the multitude of my iniquities. And I beg you that you pardon me every disobedience, irreverence, and ingratitude which I showed to you or committed against you, and all pain and bitterness which I may have caused you; and the slight zeal which I have had for our salvation. And I ask you for your blessing.

"Pray earnestly for me, and have others pray,

for the love of Christ crucified. Pardon me that I have written words of bitterness. I do not write them, however, to cause you bitterness, but because I am in doubt, and do not know what the goodness of God will do with me. I wish to have done my duty. And do not feel regret because we are separated one from the other in the body; although you would have been of the very greatest consolation to me, greater are my consolation and gladness to see the fruit that you are bearing in Holy Church. And now I beg you to labour yet more zealously, for she never had so great a need: and do you never depart for any persecution without permission from our lord the Pope. Comfort you in Christ sweet Jesus, without any bitterness. I say no more to you. Remain in the holy and sweet grace of God. Sweet Jesus, Jesus Love."

CHAPTER XX

THERE is a point of view from which Catherine's life may be pronounced a failure; but not from that outlook should her gracious personality, ardent temperament and self-denying labours be regarded.

As a politician—and her fame in history is that of a politician—she had no success, except the nominal and external one of having reconducted the pontificate to Rome. Established in Rome, neither Gregory not Urban did for the Church and Humanity what Catherine had believed was in the power of any well-intentioned pope to accomplish, or at least to begin to accomplish. Divisions that before had been only between the laity and the ecclesiastics, came between the clerics themselves. Her dream and design of a Crusade against the infidel fell to pieces before her eyes, and she failed in her attempt to rally about the chair of Christ's Vicar upon earth the men whom, more than any others, she believed to have Christ's spirit in them. She certainly contributed something to the peace at last concluded between Florence and the Pope, and she gained the restoration to her native city of the fortress of Talamone which had been taken from it by a prior of the Order of St John. But she had ever to lament over the omission by the Florentines of proper expressions of respect for the papal authority and she never was able to persuade Siena to pay to Rome a money subsidy and a toll of men-at-arms, without which tribute Urban re-

fused to raise the Interdict which lay like a paralysing hand on the city's trade and social life.

But from another aspect the life of Catherine—the Mystic Bride—may be viewed as a victory; may be regarded as an existence fruitful in much that makes a life of a woman worth living, and the life of a saint worth venerating. In the transitory things of politics she failed, as all must expect to fail who yoke to worthy principles unworthy methods and who subjugate will and conscience to an earthly tribune, a party leader, a personal cause. In the eternal things of the human soul, Catherine triumphed. Coming out of an age that lay in darkness, and emerging from a society still in bonds, Catherine has shown how high a woman's spirit may soar, how deeply her soul may divine things that belong to God's truth. That, after she had flown on the wings of imagination until she circled the heaven-set throne of Almighty Justice, and had pierced with her intellectual vision the strata of her being until she saw bubbling and drank deep of the well of the Very Truth, she prostrated herself before a scheme of earthly government and sustained herself with expedients in a fight for a political end, is only a proof that she was a woman and not a seraph; that her impressionability could not wholly resist the mould of her surroundings. She had to respond to the paramount forces of the age she lived in, and yield to circumstances in which her natural impulses placed her. She came under the sway of the Catholic idea, because of the strongly unifying instinct that was in her, and because the Catholic Church and the papal domination yet represented, although it had long since ceased to

realise, an ideal of universal brotherhood that could not but appeal to a loving woman's heart. She had the defects of her virtues—virtues that were particularly and appropriately womanly and Christian. She was humble and obedient: a handmaid of the Lord, and—like her Lord—willing to be obedient even unto death.

But, as has been said and need not be recapitulated, she served—in certain departments of her activity—an earthly lord in place of a Heavenly One, and yielded her obedience to a creature's laws instead of her Creator's. So she came into the political *mêlée* and so the integrity of her Christian womanhood was damaged and she played the part of a reactionist, when she thought to lead the van of progress.

Catherine's history, as I believe, is typical, prototypical, prophetic and representative of the history of womanhood. There are women to-day who in their subjugation to a cause—be it, as they believe, the cause of their own deliverance from bondage or the cause of the race's progress in which they pride themselves on being the instruments of lowliness whereby God confounds the mighty—forget that the leaders they follow blindly, are only human like themselves and lose sight of the fact of facts that nothing can compensate a woman for her loss of womanhood, no step lead on to purer heights of truth, justice and mercy that is not in itself sincere, just and merciful. No expedients can advance true lawfulness. The woman who leaves her home, her children and her true family duties, whether that home, those children and those duties be actual or spiritual—domiciles of wedded responsibility or

careers of beneficent activity—to demonstrate, to agitate, to take up cudgels of violence and unseemliness whereby she may advance her own importance or make her political opinions more loudly heard, is a woman lost to home, children and a career of usefulness. She never goes back.

Catherine never returned to her convent at Belcaro, or to her home in Siena. The zeal of God's house had eaten her up. The pity of it was, that she had expended time, effort, health, strength and peace of mind, not only upon rearing the fabric of that house not made with hands, which is the blessed company of all men and women who are faithful ever to the highest and best they know. She had, in a sense, left her first love, turned from her mystic Bridegroom to that bridegroom on earth whose spouse is a Church visible, enclosed with walls of many ceremonials, and having a definite political programme, a special temporal ambition.

Yet Catherine the Bride and woman, unperverted and unestranged, lives for us yet in the purity of her life, in her wonderful sweetness, in her wide heart of love. The books are many that tell of the Saint's relations to her "family"; that record the devotions of her children and that show how her spirit dwelt with those dear sons of hers whom she roused to true virility and led forth from darkness into light. And her daughters, too, were many. Children in the faith, children of her love, children by virtue of their devotion to her and her control of them, they rose and called her blessed!

The Pope and the people of Rome vied with each other in giving her pompous burial. The Pope directed her obsequies and a requiem Mass

was ordered by the Senator of Rome on behalf of the Roman populace. All of her dear family mourned visibly and most profoundly the loss of their "dearest and most venerable mother."

"Praised be our blessed and crucified Saviour, Jesus Christ! I seem left an orphan, for all my comfort was in her, and now I cannot stop from weeping. I weep not for her, but for myself, who have lost my only good," wrote one. He was telling what all felt. Yet it is said that Father Raymund was the only disciple who was certain at that time of the Saint's "blessedness," using the word in the special Roman sense. So sure was he that he determined at once to secure for her native town that "chief relic of the holy body," her head. He also caused her remains to be transferred from a damp sepulchre, that was within the precincts of the Church of the Minerva, but not inside the church, to a stone sarcophagus on the right-hand side of the high altar.

But while her form had yet lain in state awaiting sepulchre, it was noised abroad that miracles were being worked by it, and soon the tumult of those who praised her, and the strife and stress of those who brought their sick and their infirm to her shrine, were so great that it was impossible for the voices of preachers who came to deliver funeral orations to be heard. But the words spoken by one whom Catherine had always reverenced as a holy man of God (Master John III.) proved her fitting eulogy and memorial. Finding it impossible to deliver the panegyric he intended, he cried out with a loud voice: "The holy virgin has no need of our preachings, she preaches sufficiently herself." And so

she did in death as in life, for it is said that "Cardinals, prelates, nobles and plebeians, crowded round her bier, all speaking of her admirable life, trying to touch her body, or carry away portions of her garments."

But not only in the way of distributing "charms" against evil would the Saint have desired to preach, and her real sermons after death are the lives of the members of her "family," who one and all were true to her and followed, each in his or her degree of goodness—not uncommonly a superlative degree—the Heavenly Bridegroom of whom Catherine was indeed for them the "Spouse."

So the works it was natural to Catherine, as to all Christian women, to perform, the works she had received at the hands of her Heavenly Bridegroom to do—the works of mercy, of instruction, of conversion, of exhortation, of inspiration and of reproof—were all well done and bore fruits in time; even those fruits of a spiritual union and a mystic bride, "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," against which there is no law since they are perfect and unsurpassable.

In the line of Catherine's beautiful career there was as little deviation as perhaps is possible for a woman's course to show, but that deviation occurred first at the point at which a woman of intelligence, unselfishness, imagination and great-heartedness is most apt to go astray. She wanted to accomplish great works by small processes, to reach long ends by short cuts, to effect a world-wide reformation in a day. She passed out of life as she had in truth—in spite of all sweet friendships

formed—passed through it, a soul alone, yearning for the consolations of the Infinite. And, in as far as she had satisfied herself with earthly hopes and yielded herself to a creature set up for worship in place of the Creator, she was a blighted woman—a woman disappointed, agonising, desperate. But in so far as she had rested in eternal hopes and given herself humbly, meekly, devotedly to her Heavenly Bridegroom, patterning her life on the precepts of the Man Jesus and devoting her energies and substance to the Lord's Christ, she was a joyous, triumphant, happy saint, one who could yet upon her death-bed of dark pain say: "Be assured that if I die, the sole cause of my death is the zeal which burns and consumes me for Holy Church. I suffer gladly for her deliverance, and if need be, I am ready to die for her." And better still: "*All is well, thanks to our merciful Saviour!*"

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